TWICE A MONTH

Adventure

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
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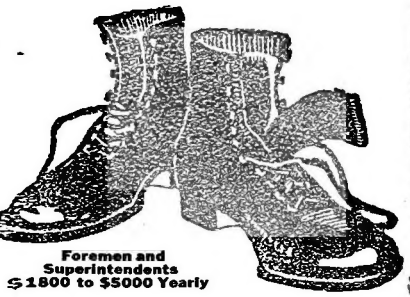

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Nov. 18th, 1919

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Vol. 23 No. 4
Serial No. 142

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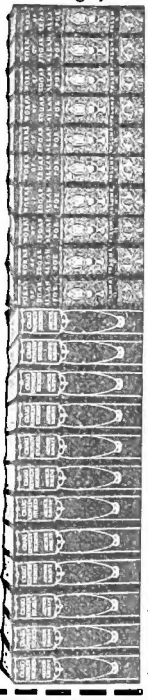
A Wife Too Many

Into the hotel lobby walked a beautiful woman and a distinguished man. Little indeed did the gay and gallant crowd know that around these heads there flew stories of terror—of murder—and treason. That on their entrance, half a dozen detectives sprang up from different parts of the place.

Because of them the lights of the War Department in Washington blazed far into the night. With their fate was wound the tragedy of a broken marriage, of a fortune lost, of a nation betrayed.



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ADVENTURE

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Why He Earns $30,000 a Year

By Victor Jones

Who Improved His Memory in One Evening

Here is perhaps the most remarkable story of memory power—and what it will do to send a man ahead in business—that I have run across since I learned, to my own great advantage, the secret of a better memory from David M. Roth, the famous memory expert.

It is the true experience of two clerks in New York City who started together, side by side, at the modest salary of $12 a week.

I have the facts straight from John Wesley, one of Mr. Roth's most successful pupils, who began his own business career in the same office with the two clerks, Powers and Weeks, whose story I am going to tell you.

I shall give it in Wesley's own words—as nearly as I can recall them—adding that he himself, at 32 years of age, has risen to the Treasurership of one of the best known corporations in New York City.

"Powers," said Wesley, "developed an accurate memory. Weeks was always forgetting. Powers with his dependable memory proved himself invaluable to his employers. He got on amazingly. He was always being pushed ahead. A raise in salary was to him a fixed semi-annual event.

"Facts and figures he had at his finger tips. He could always be counted on to do anything he was told because his employers found that they could count on him—he always remembered.

"Weeks, poor chap, was just the opposite—he was never sure of anything. He always 'guessed' or 'thought,' but never seemed to know.

"The man with the memory is now, a few years later, the head of a giant publishing enterprise with a handsome interest in the business and a salary of $50,000 a year.

"The man who could not remember is now collecting petty advertising bills for a New York newspaper. His salary is about $20 a week.

"You see the success of Powers and the failure of Weeks were largely due to one's remarkable memory and the other's inability to remember.

"I am sure this is the answer, because I had an opportunity to observe both men at close range in their daily work."

The Sequel

I saw Wesley five months later and as we were talking about the extraordinary success of the Roth Memory Course I recalled the case of Powers and Weeks.

"That's funny," said Wesley. "Do you know I ran into Weeks only yesterday in Times Square and you never saw such a change in a human being. He is in a fine new position and is going ahead fast.

"I always believed he had good stuff in him if he ever found out how to use it—but I never dreamed he would get on his feet in five short months; for the last time I saw him he was about the sorriest spectacle you can imagine.

"And to what do you think he attributes his new grip on himself?

"Nothing more or less than the Roth Memory Course, which I sent him in the hope that it would bring him to.

"Not only has Weeks found his memory but he has become keener and more observing. He says it is a wonderful feeling to be sure of his facts, as Mr. Roth's lessons have taught him to be.

"He says he is getting to remember faces and names about as easily as his A B C's and the same with telephone numbers and street addresses and business statistics.

"Weeks may never catch up to Powers because he let his fellow clerk get a very big lead, but I am certain that in another year he will be miles ahead of the point at which he would have been had he not learned from Mr. Roth how to use the perfectly good memory that his recent experience with the Roth Memory Course proves beyond question he possessed all the time."

VICTOR JONES.

For obvious reasons Mr. Jones has substituted the names Powers, Weeks, and Wesley for the real names of the gentlemen mentioned in this story.

* * * * *

David M. Roth began with a poor memory himself. He says that, more than anything else, was what set him to cultivating his own memory and working out the wonderful Roth System which has been responsible for so many thousands of improved memories all over the United States.

Mr. Roth actually could not remember a man's name twenty seconds after being introduced to him.

Yet to-day there are probably 10,000 people or more in the United States whom Mr. Roth has met at different times—most of them only once—whom he can name instantly on sight.

The accounts of Mr. Roth's amazing memory feats have been published in newspapers all the way from Seattle to New York. He goes into a banquet room or lecture hall and after being introduced to fifty or sixty people turns his back while they change seats. He then picks out every one by name and tells him his telephone number and business connection—for good measure. As Mr. Roth says, there is nothing miraculous about this. Any one can do it and the other apparently "impossible" things that so astonish Mr. Roth's audiences.

A Better Memory in One Evening

Mr. Roth's System, which he has developed through years of study, has been put into a course of seven fascinating lessons, so easy that a twelve-year-old child can learn them—yet so effective in their improvement of the memory that hundreds of business executives all over the country—by their own testimony—consider the Roth Course well nigh priceless to them.

Read this letter from Terence J. McManus, of the firm of Olcott, Bonynge, McManus & Ernst, Attorneys and Counsellors at Law, 170 Broadway, and one *of the most* famous trial lawyers in New York:

> "May I take occasion to state that I regard your service in giving this system to the world as a public benefaction. The wonderful simplicity of the method, and the ease with which its principles may be acquired, especially appeal to me. I may add that I already had occasion to test the effectiveness of the first two lessons in the preparation for trial of an important action in which I am about to engage."

Mr. McManus didn't put it a bit too strong.

A single evening spent on the first lesson will give you the secret on which the whole Roth System is based. In that first evening you should easily double your memory power.

Just think what it will mean to you to have twice as good a memory. H. Q. Smith, Manager of the Multigraph Sales Company of Montreal, says:

> "Here is the whole thing in a nutshell: Mr. Roth has a most remarkable Memory Course. It is simple, and easy as falling off a log. Yet with one hour a day of practice, any one—I don't care who he is—can improve his memory 100% in a week and 1,000% in six months."

And we could show you hundreds of other letters similar to Mr. Smith's—received in the last month alone. After a few hours with Mr. Roth's Course you will be amazed and fascinated at the new sense of confidence and power that will be yours.

You will be freed forever from the artificial memory tricks to which most of us have been slaves.

You will learn to remember instantly

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Conversations	School Lessons
Pictures	Household Duties
History and Dates	Business Appointments
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Business Figures	Social Engagements

And you will find it, not hard work as you might suspect, but just as much fun as playing an absorbing game. For Mr. Roth makes the act of remembering an easy, natural, automatic process of the mind.

Send No Money

Don't send a single penny. Merely fill out and mail the coupon. By return post, all charges prepaid, the complete Roth Memory Course will be sent to your home.

Study it one evening—more if you like—then if you feel that you can not afford to keep this great aid to more dollars—to bigger responsibilities—to fullest success in life, mail it back to the publishers within five days and you will owe nothing.

Mr. Roth's fee for personal instruction to classes limited to fifty members is $1,000 but in order to secure nation-wide distribution for the Roth Memory Course at the time above all others when Americans need all the self-improvement they can get, the publishers have put the price at only $5.

If a better memory means only one-tenth as much to you as it has to thousands of other business men and women, mail the coupon to-day—NOW—but don't put it off and forget—as those who need the Course the very worst are apt to do. Send the coupon in or write a letter now before the low introductory price is withdrawn.

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TO EX-MEMBERS of the A. E. F.

Do You Know—

what's doing in Blois to-day?

who's fighting the battle of Bordeaux?

what Montfaucon looks like now?

what became of that French kid your outfit adopted?

how to resume your War Risk Insurance?

how to get your lost Liberty Bonds?

what became of the Hard-boiled Smith investigation?

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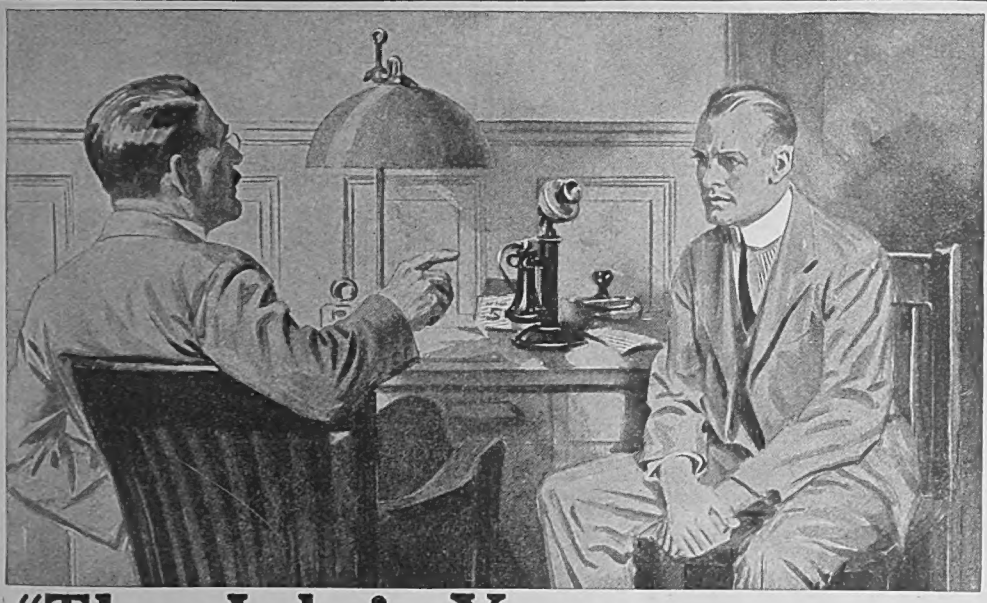

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"For a long time I watched the new men who came into this business. Some stood still—stayed right where they started. Others climbed—made each job a stepping stone to something better.

"Now, what was the difference? Well, I investigated and found out. The men who were getting ahead had been devoting part of their spare time to study along the line of their work. Our treasurer used to be a bookkeeper. The factory superintendent was working at a bench in the shop a few years ago. The sales manager started in a branch office up state. The chief designer rose from the bottom in the drafting room.

"All of these men won their advancements through spare time study with the International Correspondence Schools. Today they are earning four or five times—yes, some of them *ten* times as much money as when they came with us.

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Prove that you are that kind of a man! The International Correspondence Schools are ready and anxious to help you prepare for advancement in the work of your choice, whatever it may be. More than two million men and women in the last 28 years have taken the I. C. S. route to more money. Over 100,000 others are getting ready in the same way right now. Surely the least you can do is to find out what there is in this proposition for *you*. Here is all we ask: Without cost, without obligating yourself in any way, simply mark and mail this coupon.

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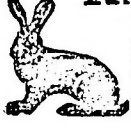

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On News-stands October 23d

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Huck Runs Away

It was such a nuisance to have to put on a collar for Sunday and black his boots and wash his face every single day, to say nothing of his ears. Huckleberry Finn had had just about all he could stand—so he *had* to run away.

Huckleberry Finn is the boy he used to be. The boy that is in the heart of every man, for men do not grow old until that boy and his memory are forever gone.

If your mother had let you, you would have been another Huckleberry Finn. You can be today in your dreams. Let Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer take you by the hand and lead you back.

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We have been selling Mark Twain at the lowest possible price because he, himself, wanted his books to be within the reach of every American family.

We have maintained this low price as long as it was humanly possible. But we can maintain it no longer.

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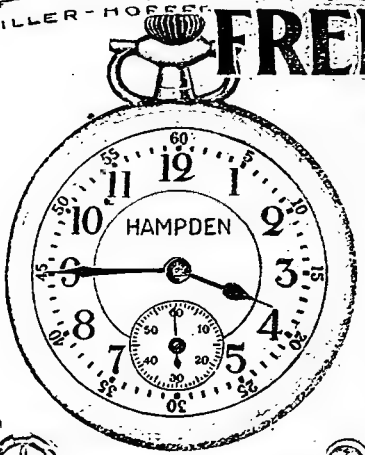

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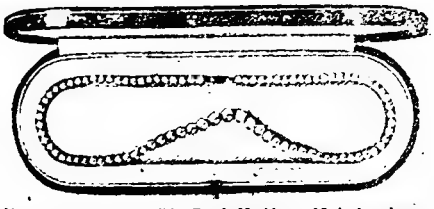

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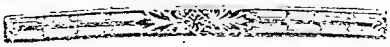

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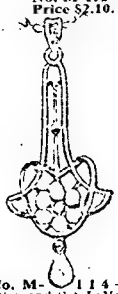

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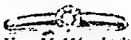

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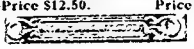

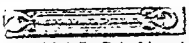

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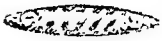

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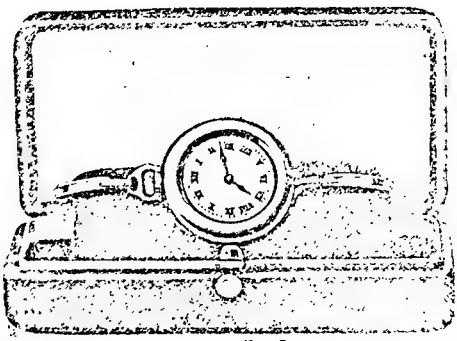

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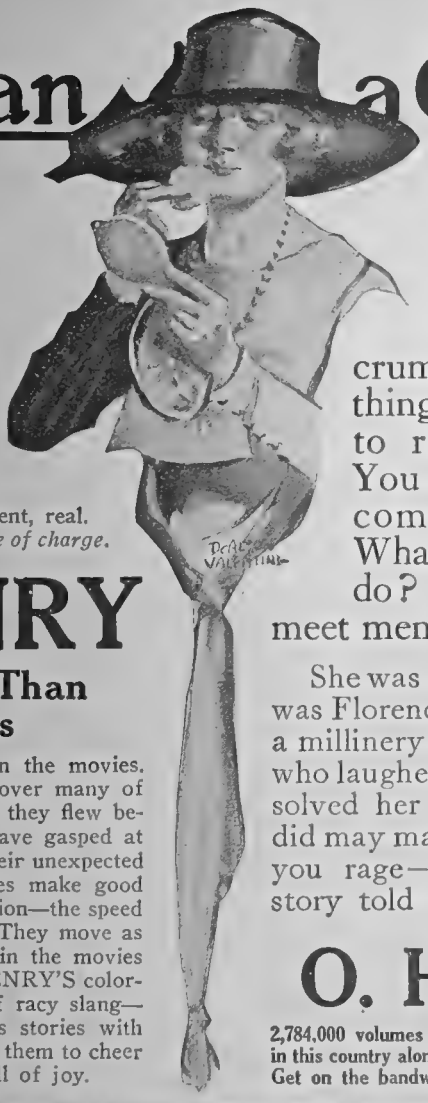

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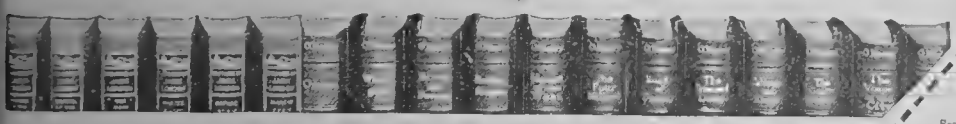

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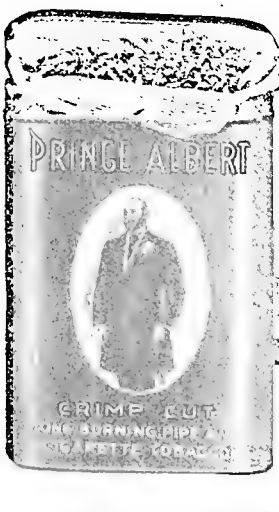

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ON THE eve of the State election *Don Everhard*, well known to you all, is arrested, revolver in hand, one chamber empty, standing by the dead body of *James H. Thorpe*, millionaire candidate for governor—"Born to be Hanged, But—" by Gordon Young, in our next issue.

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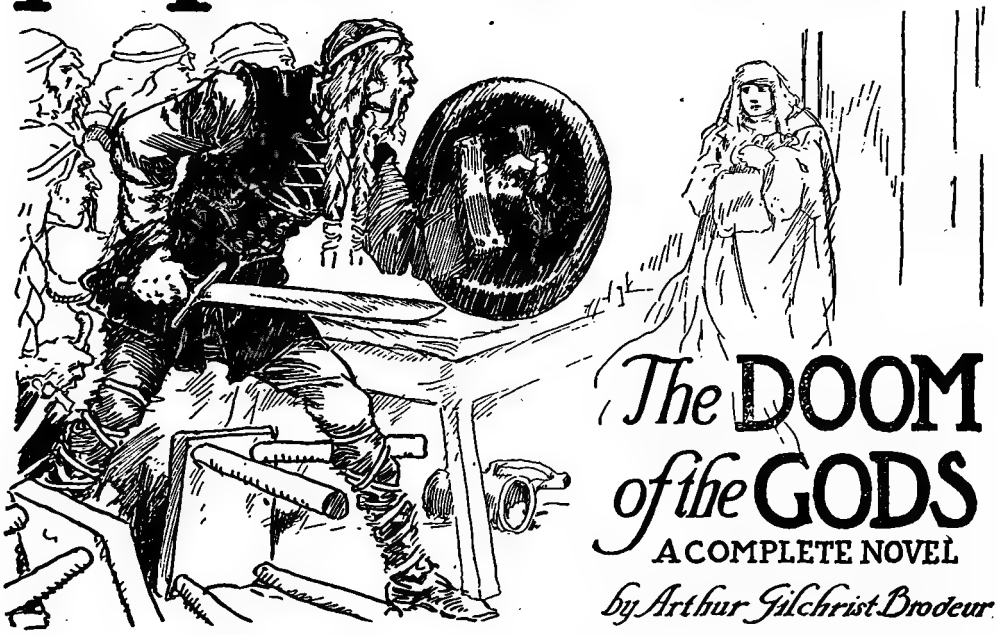

The DOOM of the GODS

A COMPLETE NOVEL

by Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur

PROLOGUE

FLIGHT

THORSTEINN the peasant set down his ale cup, wrung out his mustaches and laid a hand on his sword-hilt.

"See who knocks," he commanded; and as a thrall went to the door, Thorsteinn rose, edging over to the wall where hung his shield.

Half a dozen heavily built, sunburned laborers snatched up their weapons and clustered about him, ready to defend their master; for the times were hard for honest men. To be sure, Eric Blood-ax, the unworthy son of Harald Fair-hair, had been in his grave since 934; but his fiendish wife and murderous children still misruled the land of Norway, after five and thirty years of treachery, slaughter and shame. Thorsteinn, a man of known wealth, had much to fear from them, for they went up and down the land with bands of hired cutthroats, so that none knew on whom their wrath might fall next, or how soon the sword might tear his own breast.

The last bolt was drawn, the last bar raised; and the thrall cautiously opened the door with his left hand, holding the right behind his back, a keen knife clutched ready to strike. But the knife dropped from his fingers and he stood gaping into the Summer night. Impatient, Thorsteinn strode up and thrust his own red head over the servant's shoulder. Then he too stood silent, gasping with surprize. Before him, the torchlight from within lighting her white face and flashing from her bright hair, stood the loveliest woman his eyes had ever seen.

She seemed the one real thing in all the weird landscape, uncannily bright with the glow of the midnight sun, silhouetted against it as against a silver curtain. Close to her breast, wrapped in rich cloth that glinted with threads of gold, she clasped a child scarce a year old. Her beauty and the richness of her attire seemed all the

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more dazzling for the disarray of her hair and the stains of mud that splashed her yellow gown.

Even as old Thorsteinn stared, the baby stirred, turned its head and blinked its wide eyes upon the peasant. A smile broke over its face, lending the tiny features surprizing beauty; then the child lurched forward in its mother's arms, thrusting out both its little hands toward Thorsteinn's tousled red beard. The peasant thrust one finger into the child's open palm, and the tiny hand closed on it quickly.

Thorsteinn laughed aloud.

"A boy, by his grip!" he exclaimed. "What strength he has! He will be a hero! What is his name?"

"Olaf," the mother answered in a voice low and dragging with weariness.

"Olaf? Olaf who? How is his father called?"

The woman looked into Thorsteinn's eyes, looked long and doubtfully. Then, her obvious fear yielding to trust, she said in a hushed whisper—

"Olaf Tryggvason."

Thorsteinn started back in astonishment.

"Here, fellow!" he called to the servant behind him. "Go into the house, warm some drink and prepare food."

Then, turning to the woman again, he asked in tones as low as her own:

"Then you are Astrid, Tryggvi's widow? And this is truly Tryggvi's son?"

"Even so. You will not betray us?"

"Mighty Odin!" gasped the peasant. "The wife and child of murdered Tryggvi in my house! This is indeed a strange thing to befall a peaceful man! Well, you are safe here, my Lady Astrid. I am no traitor; my house can not be bought for gold. But how came you here? Men said that you had perished with your husband. Best tell me here and now what it is needful for me to know; for though my men are faithful, it were foolish to tempt them beyond their honesty. Eric's sons and their she-wolf of a mother would pay dearly for a sight of you and that fine boy of yours."

Astrid shuddered.

"My heart is cold with fear and watching," she spoke sadly. "When the sons of Eric Blood-ax slew my husband, I fled away with Thorolf, my foster-father. We traveled by night, hiding in the woods by day and living on what we could find. On the tenth day we came to the sea, stole a fisherman's boat and rowed for eight and forty hours without food, till we reached an unpeopled island. There the fishing was good, so that we had food, and there were springs of water. Four days afterward my child was born.

"Until Winter drove us away we stayed there; and then, venturing out only by night, we made our way to Ofrustad, where my father dwells. But the Mother of the Kings knew that if I still lived I would seek my father; and on a day her horsemen came with many spears. The peasants warned us in time and I fled once more, with a few faithful servants. It was hard, for the riders were close on our heels, so that I had scarce time to feed the boy."

Thorsteinn checked her.

"Servants?" he questioned. "Are they with you now?" And his sharp eyes searched the shadows about the house.

"They are here. Come forth, my people!" she called.

Shadows flitted from behind a clump of willows fifty yards from the building, half-visible in the bright Summer night, until four figures gathered behind Astrid: two girls and two old men. Thorsteinn frowned.

"Too many to escape unnoticed hereabout," he commented. "Have you stopped at any house since you came into this district?"

"Only tonight," Astrid answered, "at a peasant's, about two hours west of here. Our horses gave out shortly before, so that we were forced to seek hiding. We stripped the horses of saddle and bridle, turned them loose and hid the gear in a bog."

"And the peasant refused to take you in?"

"He did," the woman replied angrily.

"That was Biorn Poison-sore. No other man hereabout would have denied hospitality to a woman and child—unless he knew you, perchance?"

"He knew us not, for one of my women, who comes from Sweden, spoke for me, saying that we were belated travelers. He cursed us for Swedish beggars."

"Yet he will know surely who you are, when the horsemen of the Mother of Kings ask him whether he has seen the wife and child of Tryggvi; and he will betray you, for he is base and greedy. But you are

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worn with travel and doubtless faint for food. Come in, and I will share with you all my house affords until I hear the approach of pursuit. There is a window at the back through which you can escape while I hold them in talk at the door."

Astrid shook her head.

"May the gods bless you!" she said. "I will enter and eat; but I will stay not a moment after I have fed myself and my child. I fear not for myself, but Olaf! They will kill him!"

"That they will," Thorsteinn grimly assured her. "But enter now, and say no word within my house more than is needful. It will be easier for us all if my men know you not."

Astrid seized his hand and pressed it to her lips.

"The holy ones give you good harvest!" she sobbed. "When death calls you, my husband, who dwells in Valhalla with Odin, will welcome you to the joys of heaven! King Harald Fair-hair himself, whose great-grandchild this boy is, will pour you the mead of the gods in golden cups, and will thank you as I do for saving a helpless baby from his murderous kinsmen!"

IMPATIENTLY Thorsteinn pulled her into the house, cursing himself in his heart for the good-nature which thus dragged him into danger of death. Without a word of explanation to his household, he ordered the food and ale set before his guests, and watched them furtively as they ate in the haste of fear. When she had finished, Astrid nursed her baby openly and without shame. She was a mother who lived only for her child; though widowed and a fugitive, she had been a queen and the wife of a hero whose grandfather had founded the kingdom of Norway.

But the good meat and drink, following upon excitement and exhaustion, had their will of her. While the child still fed, she nodded and fell asleep. Thorsteinn beckoned to one of her women.

"She must have rest before she can go on," he whispered. "I will take the men to the loft, where they can bed down beside my own fellows. Do you attend your lady here; there are cushions on the benches yonder, where you can sleep as well as at home in Ofrustad."

And, taking a torch from its socket in the table, he led the old men up the staircase which mounted to the loft and silently pointed out some unoccupied bearskins on the rough floor. Picking their way over the snoring laborers, Astrid's attendants lay down.

Thorsteinn descended, went out of the house and sat down before the door, his sword between his knees. Till moonset he sat there, pondering on the straits into which his soft heart had brought him, and the chances of escape with a whole skin. Fighting would not help, for he and his men were but seven all told; and the Mother of the Kings, Eric Blood-ax' widow, must certainly have sent out a large party in pursuit of the woman and baby who alone could dispute the right of her evil sons to the throne of Norway. Yet, if it must come to fighting, he had a good blow or two in him yet.

Suddenly, startled by the soft tread of deerskin-shod feet on the grass, he leaped up, clutching his sword-hilt. A tall form loomed up in the gray light, striding toward him with the easy, almost silent walk of a woodsman. The dark and slender thing in his hand was a spear. Thorsteinn's sword quivered.

An amused chuckle, and the woodsman stopped.

"There is smoke in your eyes, Thorsteinn," he greeted.

"Aki!"

"Aye, master. All day have I toiled for you in the wood, and have but now come from my cabin with news; yet you would draw steel on me."

"What news?" Haunted by the seriousness of that which he had done, Thorsteinn suspected the worst.

"Tryggvi's wife and child have been discovered in Ofrustad and fled this way. Hakon Jarl of Ladir set out after them with thirty horse and came upon their track at Biorn Poison-sore's. Biorn told him some folk had come that way and asked him to give them shelter for the night, but that he had turned them away. So the horsemen tarried but for food and drink, and must even now be riding hitherward."

Thorsteinn seized his man by the shoulder.

"Where did you learn this?" he gasped.

"Your fingers hurt, master. I stopped at Biorn's, for it lay on my road, and I saw

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the horsemen there. I thought you would be curious about it, but why it disturbs you so much——"

"Fool! And you went to your cabin before coming to me?"

"Why not? The affair is of little moment to us."

Thorsteinn grasped Aki's head and drew the man's ear to his lips.

"I saved you from death when the Danes raided this land and would have roasted you. Do you remember?" he hissed.

Taking his master's hand in his, Aki laid it upon his head in sign of devotion.

"My life is yours, master," he said gravely.

"Listen, then. Astrid and her child are here, asleep in the hall."

Aki would have exclaimed, but Thorsteinn closed his mouth with one large hand.

"I must send them away at once, and you must get them to a safe hiding-place. You know the tufted isle of Long Lake, where the reeds grow high? The road runs by it, but there is no better place, for the trees hide the lake from sight. I will take care of Earl Hakon and his party."

"May Odin smite me if I fail!" Aki assured him.

"Then bide here till I want you!"

Thorsteinn hastened into the house, flung his sword clanging down upon the table and began to clamor as if to wake the dead.

"Thord! Kolberg! Raud! Here, you sleeping swine! A light! Bring me those strangers from the loft! Haste!"

Feet stumbled clumsily down the stair; in a moment dim forms pressed in. Flint struck fire from steel, sparks caught upon a bundle of shavings were blown into flame, and a lurid light threw a corner of the room into relief. It was some minutes before the startled, sleepy laborers get more torches lighted and the hall was bright.

Astrid sat up on her couch, pale-faced, her baby clutched to her breast. Her maids cowered on their couches. The rudely-wakened child whimpered but did not cry.

"He will be a hero!" Thorsteinn grumbled to himself.

The two old men of Astrid's little train came forward in alarm. Tugging at his beard, Thorsteinn glared at the strangers in feigned anger.

"You dogs!" he roared. "Passing yourselves off for innocent travelers, and bringing honest folk into trouble! Out of my house! Away, or I will give you over to them who seek you!"

Astrid sprang to her feet, threw her cloak about her, wrapping it around little Olaf, and walked rapidly to the door. There she stopped an instant, as if about to speak her indignation, but Thorsteinn gave her no chance.

"Out, wench!" he cried. "Get your brat and your beggars away!"

One of the old attendants pressed toward the peasant, his sword half-drawn; but Thorsteinn pushed him roughly aside and, putting both hands on Astrid's shoulders, bundled her out after. But, as he urged her out, he whispered in her ear:

"Forgive me; it is the only way. Hakon Jarl is almost upon us. My men must think that I harbored you without knowing who you are. This fellow here will guide you to a safe hiding-place. Speed!"

Aki rose up at her side.

"Follow me, Lady Astrid," he said softly and set off at once, his arm under her elbow impelling her forward.

The attendants followed after; Thorsteinn's men gaped in uncomprehending astonishment. In a little while they were out of sight in the half-dark, and then the black forest closed about them.

SCARCELY a quarter of an hour after, the beat of hoofs and the jingle of mail rang out down the road. Thorsteinn and his men, snug in bed in the loft by now, heard them while they were yet distant. Soon the procession thundered and clanked near at hand; voices pealed on the brightening dawn; an ax-handle beat upon the door.

"Open, in the name of the queen!"

The peasant fumbled his way down the stair and unbarred the door, yawning ostentatiously.

"What would ye, lord?" he asked.

"Have ye seen aught of a woman and child passing this way, with four servants?"

The speaker was a man of middle height, with fine shoulders and powerful, easy carriage. He was dressed in rich mail over velvet, with a gold-broidered half-coat, gilded helmet, and scarlet trousers wound with silk bands. He might have been five and twenty; his face was strong and ruddy, his eyes fierce and proud.

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As Thorsteinn stared at him, he stamped his foot and cried:

"Speak, hound, or I will bid my men cut you to ribbons!"

The peasant raised his head and gazed evenly into the nobleman's cruel eyes. As he did so, those eyes, still fierce, seemed almost to avoid his own, their glance turning shifty and cunning.

"Of a truth, Hakon Jarl, you do ill to threaten a free peasant," Thorsteinn rebuked him. "The ribbons you would make of my flesh will become bands of steel drawing you to death, for the people here in Skaun stand no meddling with their liberties."

Hakon frowned, then laughed lightly and stroked his neatly-trimmed golden beard.

"Forgive me," he said, with an affected good-humor. "I have ridden hard, and weariness and disappointment have made me forget my manners. But tell me—" a note of hardness crept into his voice—"the woman I ask about is Astrid, wife of Tryggvi, and the child is Tryggvi's heir. The queen offers much money for their death or capture, and it will be well for him who aids me to find them."

His face frank as a boy's, Thorsteinn answered him.

"They sought shelter of me, my lord. Not knowing who they were, I offered them food and a bed; but, overhearing their speech, I learned that they were the enemies of the queen and her sons. So I sent them away with harsh words. They have departed but an hour ago, taking their way to the wood yonder. I will guide you myself, for none knows the forest-ways hereabout better than I."

Hakon Jarl clapped him on the back.

"Thou art a good old carl! For this night's work thou shalt eat off gold and sleep on feathers! On, lads!"

Thorsteinn walking by Hakon's side, the horsemen ambling after, they wound into the wood. As they went, Hakon chattered affably, telling his peasant-guide tales of court scandal, boasting of deeds of valor, singing snatches of skaldic songs. But when they came to the denser forest, where the undergrowth became thick, he fell silent, and all rode on as quietly as jingling mail would permit. Soon they came to a fork in the forest path, one trail leading north, another east. The wood grew thick on both sides, so that no man might see through it.

Here Thorsteinn halted.

"They took the north road," he lied. "One of my men followed them and saw them turn. Half a mile from here the path turns west into Raumrealm, where they will doubtless find friends. But you can overtake them before they reach the border."

"Will they not turn aside into the thicket?" Hakon questioned.

"Hardly. The wood is full of wild beasts and too dense for travel. Besides, their only chance for food is in the forest villages, for the old carls and the women are unfit for hunting."

"Christ go with you, then!" cried Hakon; for the sons of Eric were Christian in faith if worse than heathen in deed, and the Earl of Ladir was a man to believe in the gods of his masters. "Christ go with you!"

And he dug his spurs into his horse's sides, shouting:

"Forward, lads! Who kills the brat shall have the woman for a plaything!"

The peasant spat.

"Christ indeed!" he muttered. "This land will cling to its old gods, so long as they who worship the new are such wolves!"

As the cavalcade clattered down the forest way, Thorsteinn slipped through the thicket to the right, made his way between the taller trees beyond for a space and topped a rise. From here he gazed through the interlacing branches upon the waters of an outspread lake, now glancing in the light of the brightening sun. Far to the eastward he could just make out a little island, low and reed-grown, in the middle of the broad expanse of water.

"They will never find you there," he mused. "The very boat is hidden in the rushes."

The bushes rustled, and he turned quickly. Aki stood beside him.

"When it is dark," the woodsman said, "I will fetch them to the eastern shore. From there it is but fifteen miles to the Swedish border. By morning they will be safe."

And so it was. But Hakon's parting shout, borne by the water in the morning quiet, had reached Astrid's ears. She never forgot the evil words; when little Olaf was older, she told them to him. Nor did he forget them.

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CHAPTER I

THE ARROWS OF EINAR

"A GOOD shot, for night work!"

The young man looked down complacently upon the victim of his bow: a huge bear, lying full sprawl in the midst of an avenue of pines. The night was hot; the July sun glowed like a pale ball above the horizon, bathing the Northern forest in a flood of dim gray light. Through the forest stillness, the river Gaul sang over its stony bed, on its way to the broad Thrandheim Fjord.

A pool of blood lay about the bear's shaggy head; a rivulet of blood trickled from its wounded throat. But the arrow which had struck it down, impelled by a stouter bow than most men could draw, had torn through the hairy skin and tough neck-muscles and disappeared. With an exclamation of disgust, the hunter strode to a great pine a few paces behind the fallen beast, reached high and tugged the shaft from the pitchy bark.

Suddenly he froze to alert stillness. From far away, above the plashing of the river, came the clash of steel and the clatter of swords on shields. Plucking a handful of arrows from the quiver on his shoulder, the hunter darted off at full speed toward the sound, the deep carpet of pine-needles muffling his footfalls. With the easy swiftness of a deer he ran, leaping lightly over fallen tree-trunks, his long golden hair flying behind him.

Soon the clang of steel grew louder; the falling strokes beat faster; a groan of mortal agony followed the chop of a well-driven blade. The youth slackened his pace, for the midnight sun gave so much light that he knew he was near a clearing. And from that clearing came the thud of blows, the ring of blades, the labored panting of men. Reaching the edge of the wood, the hunter dodged behind the bole of a century-old pine, peered out a moment at the conflict and fitted an arrow to the string.

The glade was small: on three sides the forest surrounded it; on the fourth, the Gaul, deeper here, interposed a barrier to the combat. Driven to the very bank, five men fought desperately for life against twenty. All were full-armored and armed to the teeth; two were blood-stained. The five kept their shields well up, the rim of one overlapping that of the next, like trained soldiers. The twenty pressed them hard, but in poorer array, striking each man for himself. Four or five dead sprawled or twisted on the crimsoned forest-floor; clearly the handful of defenders were selling their lives dearly.

The midmost of the five struck out sharply with a great two-edged sword, its blade red to the hilt. A burly giant thrust himself forward from among the assailants, brandishing a massive ax, and rushed upon the swordsman. The wooden shield was rent in two by the crashing blow; but the red sword flashed, and the giant's head leaped from his shoulders. As the slayer turned with the stroke, his fierce face and well-trimmed beard were momentarily directed toward the tree behind which the hunter watched.

"Hakon the Mighty!" breathed the boy. "Hakon Jarl!"

Raising his bow, he drew the string lightly, waiting his chance. It came almost at once. Dismayed by the fall of their champion, the attackers had drawn back a little and stood muttering. The five waited, drawing breath in deep, laboring pants.

"Now we shall see who leads!" the hunter whispered to himself, slowly increasing the tension on the string of his bow.

From the midst of the attackers emerged a short, thick-set man with glowing eyes and long, braided mustaches. He shouted angrily to his men, urging them on to the attack; with oaths he cursed them for cowards, till their sullen faces grew hot with shame. Then, heeding little whether they followed or not, he charged straight for the man he had ambushed. Hate burned in his eyes. As he sprang forward, his fellows surged about him, their fighting courage roused by his example.

His sword raised to strike, the leader was but two paces from his enemy when a strident hum pierced the air. As if struck by lightning, the charging man brought up standing, swayed and fell, the feathers of an arrow nestling against the chain-armor on his breast.

Before his fellows could take in what had happened, a stream of barbed shafts poured from the forest, so swiftly that one would have thought six men were shooting. One after another the assailants dropped in their tracks, till ten lay dead or dying on the ground. The rest

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halted, panic on their faces. Another arrow, and another! A tall spearman shrieked aloud and fell clashing in his mail, the breath whistling from his pierced throat.

Only six of the assailants still stood, too terrified at this invisible death to flee. But the shrieks of the wounded spearman tore through the stupor of their surprize. In abject terror, they turned and ran, panic at their heels. With a shout of triumph Hakon Jarl dashed after them, his four fellows following as fast as their short breath permitted. The hunter stepped out into the abandoned glade, smiling at the pursuit.

But the chase was soon over. Exhausted with their hard fight against odds, Hakon and his companions staggered back, and stopped in surprize at the appearance of their rescuer. His smooth, boyish face and flowing, well-combed hair were almost like those of a girl; but the enormous, well-proportioned frame and swelling, smooth-skinned arms were those of an unmatched athlete.

Hakon Jarl stepped forward.

"It is a good deed you have done, lad, and well shall you be paid for it," he spoke in gracious tones. . .

"I want no pay for a good deed, mighty earl," the boy answered. "It is enough of a reward to kill the enemies of Hakon Jarl, who are the enemies of Norway."

"Your clothing is that of a peasant, but your speech becomes a noble. Who are you? Never in my life have I seen such shooting."

"I am Einar, son of Eindridi of Gimsar," the hunter answered with a trace of pride.

"Einar Thumb-shaker!" cried Hakon. "I might have guessed it. No other man in Norway has such skill with the bow. It is an honor, even for such a man as I, to owe my life to you. But look, Einar; this night's work must be known to no man. Do you know him whom your first shaft struck?"

"The leader? No; his raised arms hid his face."

"He is an old enemy of mine," the earl resumed, "who has long sought to slay me. Men say, falsely, that I have wronged him; but the news of his attack would lend color to the common report. His rascals will not tell of it. They who escaped will fear my anger too much to stop running this side of the fiord. We shall say that outlaws fell upon us. Though I must deny you the full glory that comes from the slaying of a renowned man, I will repay you in another wise. Will you be my man and serve me as officer of my own bodyguard?"

The young man's face flushed with joyous excitement. He stammered out his thanks. It was a great honor which had been offered him: Hakon Jarl, Earl of Ladir in the district of Thrandheim, was now ruler over all Norway, and numbered the best of the land among his officers.

"You will go with me to Ladir, then," the earl declared. "We must start at once, if we wish to reach the town by morning."

Einar nodded.

"But what has become of your horses?" he asked innocently. "For you surely have not come so far from your hall on foot?"

Hakon's face, still handsome in spite of his fifty-odd years, darkened at the question, and for an instant he glanced suspiciously at the young man.

"We were surprized," he answered ambiguously. "Our horses are lost."

"You are weary with fighting, and it is twelve miles to Ladir," Einar suggested. "My foster-brother, Orm Lyrgia, dwells at Medalhus, scarce a mile across the Gaul; he will be proud to place his house at his earl's disposal."

Hakon considered a moment, then nodded.

"So be it. We will accept his hospitality. He is known for a loyal man."

CHAPTER II

HAKON IS GRACIOUS

AS THEY left the spot, Einar kicked the body of him who had led the attack, turning it over with his foot. As the contorted face turned up to his, he gasped.

"Bryniolf of Vigg!" he exclaimed.

Once more Hakon's eyes smoldered with suspicion, but Einar's expression was innocent.

"Aye, it is Bryniolf," the earl answered. "He was my enemy; that is enough for you to know."

"It is enough," Einar conceded. "But I marvel that a man who has fought under your banner and received wounds in your defense could be so base as to turn his sword against you now."

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Hakon was silent. Einar, who knew the fords better than the courtiers in the earl's train, led the way along the river to the shallows. The others followed him into the stream, which here was not more than waist-deep; and by joining hands and bracing against the current, the six made their way across. A quarter of an hour brought them within sight of a small village in a clearing, the houses of which were grouped around three sides of one central building. This, more pretentious than the rest, Einar pointed out as the dwelling of Orm Lyrgia.

"They rise early," he remarked to Hakon. "See, smoke is already rising from the roof."

As they came nearer, they heard sounds of merriment, the laughter of girls and the shouts of feasting men. Einar pounded on the door, which was flung wide at once. A huge old man, with long white hair and a snowy beard that reached his waist, greeted the young archer with loud good-humor.

"Einar Thumb-shaker!" he roared. "Thou art as welcome as mead to a thirsty throat! Come in and drink with us. Thy friends will find good feasting here!"

Just then, as Hakon moved toward him, he recognized the earl, and his voice stuck in his throat and he bowed low.

A young man's voice cried from within: "Einar, say you, Father Bergthor? Bid him in at once! He must drink at my wedding!" And the speaker stood in the doorway behind the old man.

Catching sight of Hakon, he too bowed and courteously invited the master of Norway to enter. Hakon complied with an air of gracious patronage. His men followed, Einar last. Turning to the young man with Bergthor, the earl asked—

"Thou art Orm Lyrgia?"

Orm bowed assent. He was tall and slender, but strongly made and sinewy. Curly black hair framed a face ruddy as a red apple, and sparkling black eyes gleamed above a strong aquiline face.

"I am Orm," he said courteously, "and I thank the gods for bringing the great Earl Hakon to my house."

The room, which had rung so boisterously with the sounds of peasant rejoicing, was now hushed in excited anticipation. More than a dozen men, and as many women and girls, stood about the two tables at which they had been feasting. Huge platters filled with roast meat were placed where all might help themselves; before the place of each guest stood a deep tankard of mead. All the company were flushed with food and drink; the girls wore garlands of flowers and were decked out in brightly colored garments.

No man there bore a weapon, but the walls were hung with swords, boar-spears, shields and hunting-trophies. The room was cloudy with smoke from a great fire in the central hearth, at which servants were still roasting the flesh of deer and wild pig. The rich savor filled the hall and eddied with the smoke to the outlet in the middle of the roof.

Hakon shook hands with every man of the company and kissed all the women. Then he introduced to the household the four courtiers: Skopti of the Tidings, a herculean sea-captain, gnarled and weather-beaten; Thorleif the Wise, a famous chief and war-leader; Thorkel Leira, huge, fierce, old in fight and in villainy; Tind Hallkelson, court skald and singer of marvelous battle-songs. Einar Thumb-shaker needed no introduction to the peasants, who greeted him joyously; but they welcomed the earl and his great warriors gravely and with self-contained dignity.

"Where is Gudrun?" cried Bergthor, the white-haired ancient. "Gudrun! Come hither, my child, and kneel for the earl's blessing!"

Orm Lyrgia laughed fondly.

"She is shy before guests, father," he explained. "She ran to the bower when Einar knocked. I will fetch her."

"Gudrun is my daughter, my only child," Bergthor told the earl. "She has just been taken in marriage by young Orm Lyrgia, and this is their wedding-feast."

"I am happy to attend so joyous a festival," Hakon replied benignantly, quaffing his third bowl of mead. "Thank you, I will not eat, but my men will be hungry."

As the attendants passed the smoking dishes, the guests did justice to his words.

Of a sudden Thorkel Leira, his ill-omened face distorted with a great mouthful of roast boar, rose from his seat and laid his hand on the shoulder of Bergthor, whom he had been scrutinizing off and on ever since they had entered.

"I know you now, White-beard!" he

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shouted. "You bore the earl's banner at the Dane-work! I saw you strike down seven Saxons that day!"

Hakon turned in his seat.

"Are you Bergthor of Lund?" he asked, his eyes alight with recollection of his most glorious battle. "Was it you who struck down Kaiser Otto's shield-bearer?"

Old Bergthor beamed with gratification.

"It was I," he said simply. "We had good fighting that day."

"I wonder I did not recognize you," the earl mused. "No better soldier ever marched with me."

"That was twenty years ago, and my hair was yellow then."

"Ho, Tind! Sing the song you made on our fight with the Germans!" Hakon commanded, and the skald struck his harp.

But the song was never sung. As the first chord vibrated through the hall, Orm Lyrgia entered from the bower, leading his bride by the hand. At sight of her Hakon started violently; the guests all rose in spontaneous admiration; Tind's harp dropped from his fingers.

GUDRUN was indeed of marvelous beauty. Her eyes were radiantly, meltingly blue; her skin was soft, and warm with vivid color; a mass of rich golden hair crowned her head and rippled, unbound, to her knees. Her splendid head was held high, regardless of the blushes that flooded her face; her arms, gloriously molded, were bare to the round elbows.

As was fitting, Orm led his wife straight to the guests, and first of all to Hakon Jarl. She would have knelt; but Hakon prevented her, took both her cheeks in his hands and kissed her on the lips. The company shouted applause, for such courtesy from the lord of the land was both a high tribute to the bride's beauty and a goodly omen for her married life. Carried away by his emotion, old Bergthor called for more mead and kept the flagons circulating. The company, already merry, became boisterous. Soon Bergthor and Thorkel were boasting loudly of the earl's battles, and of their own parts in his campaigns.

"There is no king like our earl!" Bergthor cried. "He slew Gold-Harald, the Dane, though the long-ships were two to one against him! He scattered the hosts of the kaiser; he burst asunder the bonds of Denmark, in which our land lay captive, and set the peasants free! Glory and praise to Hakon, who walks with victory! Having befooled the evil sons of Eric Blood-ax into perilous friendship, he beguiled them and smote them, Christian dogs that they were! He brought the old gods back! Odin smiles upon him, and gives us good harvests!"

At each exultant sentence, Bergthor emptied his cup, which was as promptly filled by the waiting servant; and ever Hakon graciously pledged him in cup for cup. But the earl's glances were uneasy, for Bergthor's words brought back dark memories. Hakon had not always gained his victories honestly: behind his back malcontents still whispered that Gold-Harald, whom he had defeated and hanged, had been his friend; that Hakon had basely betrayed the Danish king, who trusted him, and had employed evil wiles against the sons of Eric and their tigress mother.

The old queen still lived, exiled from her kingdom by that very earl whom she had made great, consuming her heart with grief for her children whom he had slain. Thinking of these things, Hakon was troubled in his heart. And ever as the shadow crossed his face, his eyes wandered across the table to the fresh young beauty of Gudrun, Orm's bride. Her glance sought the floor before those hungry eyes, but still he gazed and gazed at her. Orm saw not; Bergthor was drunk with mead and the remembrance of his youthful battles; but Einar the archer saw and was faintly troubled.

At last Thorkel Leira rose.

"Your pardon, Hakon Jarl," he said, "but my wounds are stiff. If Orm has a bed for me, I will seek it."

The rent armor and crimsoned bandages of his guests had not escaped Orm's attention; but it was none of his affair, and to speak of it would have been discourteous. No Norseman, unless hurt badly, thought enough of a battle-scratch to forego drink for rest and healing. Their mail had served them well and Einar's arrows had saved them from more than slight injury. But now Hakon also arose, extending his hand to his host.

"I will sleep a day in your house, if you will permit," he asked, "then go to Ladir with my men and Einar here, who has entered my service. I will take it kindly,

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Orm, if you inform his grandsire Styrkar. We were attacked by outlaws from the Meres and might have perished but for Einar's bow. Let me see that bow, Thumb-shaker!"

Einar fetched it from the corner and handed it to his lord. The earl tried to bend it lightly, but to his astonishment it yielded barely an inch. Bracing his feet, he drew back upon the string with all the strength of his mighty arms. In vain; he could not bend it. All watched in awe-struck surprize, for Hakon Jarl was one of the strongest men in the North, in spite of his ordinary stature. Laughing to hide his embarrassment, he threw down the bow and stole a look at Gudrun to see how his discomfiture affected her. A slight smile trembled on her lips. He bit his own to keep down his vexation.

"We are lucky, Orm Lyrgia, both of us," he exclaimed with bluff good grace. "In Einar Thumb-shaker you have a mighty foster-brother, I a mighty housecarl. He is as sturdy a warrior as your wife is a beautiful woman. The gods be good to them both and grant them high fates! To bed, all!"

CHAPTER III

BERGLIOT

AS THE earl and his companions rode into Ladir on the horses Orm Lyrgia had lent them, Einar was astonished at the smallness of the town that was then the virtual capital of Norway. Though he had been born and brought up within a dozen miles of Hakon's hall, he had never seen it; for his stern grandfather, Styrkar of Gimsar, who took the place of the boy's dead father, held that the son of a chief should not approach the earl's abode till he had accomplished some great deed, the report of which should go before him and clothe him with honor and dignity.

"In Ladir you will meet men who have fought from the Turkish Straits to Ireland," he told his grandson. "How, then, will you hold up your head before them unless you, too, have won the fame of a warrior? A man does not go before his earl empty-handed."

But now, Einar felt, he had proved himself a warrior, so that the earl himself was proud to take him into his own bodyguard, and he could approach those famous men as an equal. His young heart sang in his breast to the beat of his horse's hoofs; he felt that he was indeed entering the paths of glory. He would march to battle under the standard of the victorious Hakon, who, from earl of the mere estate of Ladir, had raised himself to be ruler of the whole land, and might take the name of king whenever he chose.

Nowhere in the world was there a braver, more successful general than the earl, nowhere a lord more bountiful to his followers. Einar had pictured the court as a great city of spacious halls, shining with gold and gay with storied tapestries, peopled with mighty warriors like Thorkel and Skopti, radiant with women more beautiful than Gudrun, ringing with the songs of skalds like Tind.

And now, as they rode along the white highway by the majestic fiord and the few small buildings of the court rose up before them, he wondered that this insignificant settlement could be the abode of the princely Hakon Jarl, the greatest of Norwegians since Harald Fair-hair. True, the fiord was alive with stately ships of war; small companies of troops, splendidly armed and accoutered, were drilling on the low plain before the town; but any chief in the land might build such houses as these without straining his purse, and the troops were fewer in number than he had expected.

But when he entered the hall itself Einar wanted to stop and rub his eyes. Their horses were taken by a detachment of guards at the very step of the largest of the buildings; and, entering after Hakon, the young man himself passed between two rows of wild-looking warriors from Halogaland—tremendous men, clothed in triple mail and armed with broad-faced, gold-inlaid axes. As the earl came in, a loud shout went up from a score of finely-dressed courtiers, who rose from the table at which they had been playing drafts with golden pieces on an ivory board and pressed forward to welcome their master.

They were gay in mantles of green and scarlet; their arms were ablaze with jeweled armlets and spiral rings of precious metal; costly swords hung at their sides. Three or four women also rose from a carved circular bench at which they had been working, laid aside a gorgeous piece of tapestry in which their needles still stuck, and came

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toward the earl with glad greetings. All the men, regardless of age, bore scars of battle, all were well-made and war-like in appearance; the women were young and beautiful.

With a kindly word to each, Hakon Jarl walked directly to the high seat at the further end of the hall, mounted the dais and sat down, assuming an air of lofty dignity. At once the courtiers were silent; the women departed through a doorway hung with rich and heavy curtains.

"Chiefs of the people," Hakon began slowly, "I bring into your fellowship this young man, Einar of Gimsar, son of Eindridi and grandson of your comrade and friend, Styrkar the Stalwart. Rebuke him not for his tender years, for he is worthy to stand before you. With his single arm he dispersed twenty outlaws from the Meres, who dared attack me in my own forest of Gaulardale. But six of them left the field alive. Gaze well upon his arms; behold the bow at his shoulder, which not even I could bend. You know his blood is noble; you see the strength with which the gods have blessed him.

"Einar, the life which I owe to your skill and courage I will ransom worthily. Behold this sword—" he rose and took from the carved post of the high seat a splendid weapon, sheathed in an ivory scabbard bound with silver—"which I won with my own hand from Ragnfrod, bravest of the warlike sons of Eric Blood-ax. Wear it for me, and draw it only against my enemies."

The assembled courtiers, used as they were to the prodigal generosity of the earl, gasped at the favor thus shown so young a man. Noting the effect and disdaining to limit his bounty by the approval of his underlings, Hakon raised his hand.

"NAY, more!" he cried as Einar received the gift with trembling hands and gazed round-eyed at the gleaming ruby in the sapphire-studded hilt. "Nay, more! My daughter, Bergliot, shall herself bind it to his side!"

Now in very truth the courtiers were amazed, for such honor had never befallen any of them; no, not to Thorleif the Wise, for all his battles; not to Thorir Hart, captain of the Halogaland Guardsmen. But Hakon clapped his hands; there entered a short, dark man with muscles that stood out on every limb and an iron ring round his neck, above which a swarthy flat face leered from close-set evil eyes. To him the earl gave order—

"Bring Bergliot hither."

Bowing, the slave withdrew so noiselessly that he almost seemed to fade, yet leaving behind him an uncanny sense of something powerfully vile. In spite of his dazzling good fortune and the golden dreams in which he swam, Einar felt so great a horror of the man that he instinctively signed himself with the sign of Thor's hammer, which keeps away spells. Thorkel Leira drew quietly beside him and whispered unobtrusively:

"That is Kark, the earl's favorite thrall. Watch him, for he is a snake with poisoned breath."

But now the hanging was drawn aside and all eyes turned toward the doorway. With a soft rustle of draperies, a girl appeared before them—such a woman as Einar had never before seen. She was tall as a man, deep-chested, strongly made, yet slender and inexpressibly graceful. She moved with such ease as that of wind-blown thistledown, but with queenly, purposeful dignity. Her golden braids were bound with strung pearls and crowned with a circlet of gold wire; her skin was so delicate it seemed transparent, rosy with health as it was. Her wide gray eyes were like a child's, yet in them some unformed trouble seemed to lurk; her strong, fine features were grave and thoughtful. Into Einar's mind floated the lines of a song the women sang in Gimsar:

> Roses and lilies in the golden sunshine,
> Roses and lilies wet with Freyja's tears.

In defiance of courtly etiquette, every eye in that room left Hakon standing before the high seat and turned to Bergliot, queenlike in her gracious calm. Einar himself stood rooted to the spot, unable to raise his eyes from her face. His thoughts dwelt ever on roses and lilies and the tears of the gentle goddess Freyja, most worshiped by youths and maidens of the North.

But Hakon was speaking:

"My daughter, this young man before you saved you from the fate of the orphan, by a deed so great that skalds shall sing of it for a generation. I have therefore bestowed on him this sword: do thou gird it on him."

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Now Bergliot's gaze rested on Einar and her troubled eyes lighted in gratitude. For a full minute she surveyed him, noting well his clear, frank face and clean youth; then she took the sword from his hands, knelt beside him and made as if to fasten the clips of the scabbard to his belt. But she paused and said in a sweet, bell-like voice—

"The belt is not worthy of the sword."

Then Skopti of the Tidings stepped forth to her side, stripped from his waist a magnificent girdle of joined golden plates, each big as a shield-boss and beaten into designs of birds and serpents, and gave it to Bergliot, saying:

"I won this in battle thirty years ago from an Irish under-king who boasted himself the foremost champion in the kingdom of Dublin. Wear thou it, Thumb-shaker, for thou hast done a greater deed than I!"

Hakon's eyes lighted with joy; for Skopti was of all his host the greatest soldier and the man whom he most loved, and such a gift from him was a fitting pendant to the earl's generosity. Moreover, his friendship assured Einar the good-will of the whole court, for men were accustomed to look to Skopti as the model of manly behavior. As for Einar, he stood dumfounded, knowing not what to say or do, only turning grateful eyes from Skopti to Bergliot and vowing in his soul that his arms, head and heart should render service even unto death to such a lord, to such a comrade-in-arms, to such a woman.

With deft fingers Bergliot unfastened the stained leather belt which bound his waist, replaced it with the golden girdle and made fast the scabbarded sword. Then, rising, she looked upon Einar steadily and said:

"This leather, which has bound the sides of him who saved my father's life, shall be my cherished possession. The sword which girds you, your earl's gift, is a sign of service; but see thou to it that the service be that of a clean man! Not every one who wears steel wields it honestly. Raise this weapon never for wrong or shame; use it always in defense of the weak, in furtherance of the right! Keep thy sword and thy soul unstained!"

His cheeks crimson, Einar returned her gaze steadily and cried—

"As the gods live, I will!"

CHAPTER IV

KARK

AT THE midday meal Einar stood behind Hakon's seat and poured the wine for the earl and Bergliot. Intended as a mark of special favor, this task gave him ample opportunity to watch the expressive face of Hakon, whom he already worshiped with almost doglike fervor, and to cast furtive glances at Bergliot, that woman so different, so far above the fairest of the red and white maidens of the countryside.

There was about her something so high, so like his boyish conception of the goddesses in their radiant heavenly palaces, that she seemed as remote from him as they; nonetheless she had for him a fascination such as no other woman had ever wakened in him. The banquet was like a rosy dream of Valhalla. He stood in the presence of heroes famed wherever valiant deeds were sung; he served the foremost prince of the age, and surely the fairest woman that the earth could boast.

So absorbed was he in his own imaginings that he failed to take in the rude jests, the often obscene gibes, that one of these glorious warriors flung at another; failed to notice the boasts of cruel deeds that often fell from their bearded lips. Whenever his attention strayed from the earl and his daughter, it roamed to the foot of the table, where sat Eric the Young, Hakon's oldest son, about whom skalds already sang songs of incredible heroism.

Eric was a splendid young animal, with all the fierce vitality of his father, ruddy through his tan, blond-mustached, with a sword-cut over his left eye, a decoration of which he seemed inordinately proud. He was entitled to his vanity, for that scar had been won in a lone fight against three vikings, all of whom he had killed without yielding an inch of ground.

The meal over, Hakon dismissed him and went to his chamber to sleep. Einar was promptly hailed by young Eric, who passed one arm about his shoulder in easy good-fellowship and praised him lavishly for his bravery. Such praise from such a warrior went straight to Einar's simple heart, and he felt a warm friendship for the young prince. Eric introduced him to the other courtiers: Gudbrand the White, a tall, ill-made mountaineer, with hair so

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light, even for a Norseman, that it had given him a nickname; Thorir Hart, a burly giant with a slashed lip and a bold, challenging eye; Skeggi of Yrjar, who could outswim and outwrestle any other man; Rognvald of Stad, who had slain three bears with a little ax; and many others, champions all, men as apt to quarrel as to drink.

Among such men Einar felt his youth and insignificance with almost tragic humility; but all greeted him with cordial ease, as one of themselves—and indeed, their appraising eyes told them that a youth with such limbs and such skill in archery might go as far as any of them in Hakon's service.

But all had duties to perform; some with the fleet, others with the troops, mostly new levies, who were drilling on the plain, and soon Einar was left alone, for he had not yet been assigned to his own tasks. He left the hall and with eager curiosity set about exploring the earl's garth, the enclosure surrounding the court-buildings, and the buildings themselves.

Having made the rounds of the warriors' quarters, the stables and the mews—for Hakon was an enthusiastic falconer—and after a prolonged inspection of the soldiers going through simple maneuvers outside the palisade, he found himself walking idly down the road toward the beach, where four fine new long-ships lay on the flat sands, propped up with timbers, their dragon-heads still glistening with fresh paint. Like all Thrandheimers, Einar had a sailor's eye, and he was gloating over their fine lines, when a shadow fell before him and a hand was laid on his shoulder. He spun round at once and found himself face to face with the leering ugliness of Kark, the earl's thrall.

The same repulsion which he had felt for the man in the hall seized him now, and must have shown in his eyes; for the thrall dropped his hand and said mockingly——

"Am I so terrible, that you blanch from me as you did not blanch from Bryniolf of Vigg and all his men?"

Einar started.

"Bryniolf?" he echoed.

"Aye, Bryniolf. It was a fine tale that, of outlaws from the Meres; but it is too old a story to gull old Kark."

Einar was silent. How the fellow knew the identity of Hakon's assailants he could not guess; but it was not for him, Einar, to reveal to a slave that he had truly guessed what the earl wished to be kept hidden.

"Well, at least Bryniolf's wife will have five fine horses to pay her for her husband's death and her tarnished honor," Kark resumed, still in the same jeering tone.

Einar, both puzzled and angry, looked straight into the slave's evil eyes.

"What mean you?" he demanded.

"I know what I know," the other replied tantalizingly.

Gripping Kark's arm savagely with his powerful fingers, Einar retorted:

"I know not what is in your thoughts; but this I know, that what happened is none of your affair. The earl desires that there be no talk of it; so, unless you swear to keep silence, I will forget your mean birth and break your neck as if you were a free man."

Kark's arm must have felt the pain of Einar's clutch, but without giving the least sign of discomfort, he reached out his unencumbered left hand, took hold of a spike which the carpenters had left two-thirds driven into the ship's timbers and plucked it out of the tough wood as a girl would pluck a feather from a pillow.

"Strong you are, but Kark, too, is strong, and fears you not," he answered lightly. "Besides, in the earl's favor as you are, if you laid a hand on me he would have you trampled to death by his horses; for he loves no man as he loves me. I was born on the same day as himself, and he holds me lucky. As for his secrets—" and the ugly fellow sneered— "they get abroad sooner or later. In the meantime, I hear them first—from his own lips."

Little as Einar was inclined to believe the thrall, he soon found that his words were true. Kark's ascendency over the earl's superstitious nature was so great that Hakon's best warriors and noblest chiefs went to the slave when they wished to curry favor with his master. But Einar's curiosity was piqued and he demanded:

"You have hinted strange things; I will know more of them. If you refuse to tell me, the earl's protection will do you small good, seeing that you will be with the dead. Say on, quickly!"

Kark read in Einar's eyes that the archer meant his threat, and his mean soul quailed.

"It is but this, then," he said. He spoke sullenly, yet with a certain vicious relish ill-concealed. "Hakon has long been overfamiliar with Bryniolf's wife. Bryniolf was

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loath to believe the scandal, though men of repute bore the tale to his ears; but he set spies on the woman and learned that it was true. Three days ago, being told that Bryniolf was away, the earl visited her with a small escort, as usual, so as to avoid suspicion. But the wronged husband returned unexpectedly, found the birds in the cage, drove away Hakon's horses and almost captured him.

"Hakon and his escort got away by a trap-door which he had caused to be made in the bower against just such a chance, and made on foot for the wood. Soon Bryniolf picked up the scent and you came along just in time to balk his revenge. That is why Hakon wants the matter hushed up; it is also why a man who has received wounds in the earl's wars sought his life."

Einar, furious with rage and disgust, shook the slave like a reed.

"You lie, you dog!" he breathed through grinding teeth.

"I lie not," asserted the other. "I have often carried messages between the earl and the woman."

His anger leaping all bounds, Einar seized him about the body and would have crushed him in his powerful arms. But with a quick twist Kark freed himself and fled back toward the garth at unbelievable speed. Stopping just within earshot, he cried derisively——

"You will learn much, milksop, before the hair grows on your chin!"

And he was off again, fleet as the wind.

AS SOON as his anger cooled, Einar gave no further thought, for the time, to the slave's tale. Brought up by his grandfather to revere the very name of the mighty earl, to regard him as the savior of Norway from the tyrannical sons of Eric Blood-ax. as the restorer of the ancient religion and the friend of the peasants, the great man was for him the incarnation of all that was heroic. He could no more have credited scandal against Hakon than he could have believed him a coward; and all the world praised the earl's courage.

A few days after his talk with Kark Einar was called to the earl's presence and assigned to the command of a company of archers. All picked men from the Thrandheim district, they were masters of the five-foot bow and could hit a helmet at fifty paces. But they had much to learn from the Thumb-shaker, as Einar was now called by all men. The name was given him in admiration for the lightning speed with which he loosed arrow after arrow in swift succession, striking the target unerringly with each.

He taught his men how to draw the string with the elbow reversed, so as to gain four inches tension, and impart from fifteen to twenty paces more distance to the flight; he taught them how to loose by a mere quiver of the thumb, so that the arrow flew straight instead of being jerked from the direct line. But none of them ever succeeded in duplicating his feat of sending a pointless shaft through two fresh bull's hides hung on a rope, for none had his preternatural strength. Day after day he kept them on the range, till they shot as they had never shot before. And the earl, who often witnessed their practise, praised him till he blushed.

He saw Kark often, and always the man passed him with a covert wink and his tongue in his cheek. A feverish hatred for the slave grew in Einar's mind and once he tried, very discreetly, to hint to the earl that Kark might not be any too faithful. But Hakon at once grew suspicious and frowned angrily. Once, when in his cups, the earl embraced the slave publicly and proclaimed him the most faithful servant a man ever had.

Einar remembered the slave's boast that he shared Hakon's secrets, and in spite of his loyalty doubts rose to trouble him. But the sight of Bergliot was always enough to drive them away; for, boylike, Einar transferred to the father the unalloyed goodness of the daughter, and his admiration for her made him the more devoted to the earl.

But one day, while off duty, as he was playing drafts with Thorkel Leira, Einar's doubts were confirmed. Thorkel was losing heavily, and after a disastrous game which transferred a prized golden bracelet from his arm to Einar's, the fierce-faced old warrior threw drafts and board on the floor, crying:

"Loki curse the pieces! They are as false as Hakon's promises to women!"

Einar sat stupefied. Recovering quickly from his anger, Thorkel noted the boy's dismay and laughed aloud.

"What, then, lad? Did you not know the earl's weakness?"

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"I do not know, and I will not believe," Einar stammered.

Again Thorkel laughed, somewhat unpleasantly.

"Why, let me tell you, then, that Hakon is mad for women, and most shameful in his treatment of them. Oh, it is no secret; it is a wonder that you have not heard before this. The court reeks with scandals. Why, it was over a woman that he fell into the brawl from which you saved him."

Einar's face was white.

"It is true, then," he choked, "that he dishonored the wife of a man who had bled for him? Was that the reason——"

"For Bryniolf's attack? Aye. Should I not know, when I was with him? And look you: the earl does not dream that the world knows of his follies. He tells Kark, and Kark babbles to the court, being loose-tongued and knowing also that the reputation of being in the earl's confidence makes a great man of him. Already pretty tales are abroad among the peasants. Have you never noticed that there are few nobles of ancient lineage among Hakon's followers? He had driven them from him by such deeds, and they hold it dishonor to serve him.

"We who serve him are for the most part rough fighting-men, good enough with our hands, but with no honor to lose. Now Hakon carries on his intrigues among the peasant women and the Thrandheim peasants are none too docile folk. There is much muttering about this affair of Bryniolf, for the people loved him and are angered at his death. Each man who has a pretty wife fears that his turn may come next."

For a while Einar sat silent, bitterness in his heart. Chief that he was by blood, he and his race had always been country-folk and regarded the peasants more as equals than as inferiors. They were his people; a wrong against them was a wrong against the chiefs, who were the hereditary leaders of the peasants. If it had been any man but Hakon!

The reverence, almost love, in which he had held the earl was too great to be dethroned in a moment. Yet never in his life had he felt such bitterness, never had he dreamed of such baseness. And that that baseness should live in the heart of his master, the hero, the idol, the uncrowned king of Norway! Bergliot's father! The thought was too monstrous for endurance.

Yet it was true. His idol tottered on its throne. What would happen if the enraged peasants should take vengeance for Bryniolf into their own hands, should rise against the earl? They were his people; they had been grievously wronged and feared for their own homes. What assurance did they have that their hearths would be inviolate? Any man with a pretty wife——

And he, what should he do if the peasants rose? Bound to Hakon by every tie of loyalty, Hakon's man, indebted to him for rich gifts, for the sword he wore, for rank and wealth? Aye, and loving Hakon's daughter?

For he no longer hid that from himself. Every day he had waited upon her at table; more than one happy time he had talked with her in the bower, and her rich beauty, her grave stateliness, her pure, direct outlook upon life had been as wine to his spirit, quickening and refreshing him. What could he do if Hakon's base folly drove the people to revolt?

Thorkel was watching him closely, trying to keep pace with the boy's thoughts. At last Einar raised his face, stern now as it had never been before in his glad young life, and with pale, thin lips he said, scarce knowing his own voice:

"There is but one thing to be done. We are the earl's men; we must see that the people do not rise. Once swords are drawn, there will be no withholding them, and the innocent would suffer."

Thorkel rose and gripped Einar's hand.

"I am a bloody old churl," he said, "and have done things in my time which the gods will hold against me; you are young and honest. You have put your finger on the nub of the thing; the people must be kept quiet. Hakon is not the man he once was, for drink and his love of women have blinded his cunning and sapped his will. A revolt might be put down, but it might mean overthrow for Hakon and ruin for Norway.

"Aye, the peasants must be kept content. And to assure that, Hakon must be kept from his follies. I can not persuade him, for I have dipped deep in shame with him. You may do more. Watch him closely now, for he has been often silent and distraught of late, which is a sign that his fancy has lighted on a new love."

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Einar returned the rough old warrior's grip.

"What I can, I will do," he said. "The earl seeks my company often, though he is oftener with Kark. I will strive as best I may to avert evil, not altogether for Hakon, though I am faithful to him whom I serve; but for the sake of——"

He paused.

"I know," Thorkel answered gruffly. "For the sake of her whom all of us here, even the wildest, honor and reverence above all living things. May the gods protect her!"

"They shall have a helper," said Einar.

CHAPTER V

THE SHADOW OF JOMSBORG

WINTER drew on, and with its first ice, the building and launching of ships on Thrandheim Fiord was abandoned. Drill was shortened for the men-at-arms; there was little hunting these short, bleak, dark days, and the court spent most of its time in feasting and indoor games. The courtiers drank more than was good for them. Hakon was still gracious to all who attended him, but he withdrew more and more from the company of his chiefs and spent days in his chamber, brooding, or in consultation with Kark.

The only one among his officers whom he sent for often, or talked with freely, was Einar. Something in the archer's unspoiled youth, or the glorious promise of his strength, inclined the hardened warlord to him more than to his older companions. This suited Einar's purpose very well; he was with the earl almost as often as Kark, so that the thrall's jibes were tinged with jealousy. And Einar watched his master closely, though with a tact beyond his years. Yet watch as he might, he could see no more in Hakon's face than brooding discontent and was almost persuaded that the scandals which had alienated his trust were mere malicious gossip.

Bergliot, too, he saw often; yet the curtain of grave reserve which veiled her in mystery was rarely lifted to him. Much as she baffled him, she did not treat him with conscious aloofness; she was naturally a self-contained woman, who thought more than she spoke and rarely betrayed her thoughts without some particular reason. Yet this disturbed Einar little, for she was always kind to him and clearly liked him. Neither was he at all discouraged by her high rank from hoping for more than kindness. The son of a Norwegian chief was, in all but wealth and the accident of election to power, the equal of any earl. If he could once be admitted to her confidence, he might freely try to win Bergliot's love.

Eric the Young had gone off to Raumrealm, one of the southeastern districts, to collect taxes from the peasants and watchthe near-by Danish coast for signs of hostility. No love was lost between the two peoples since Hakon Jarl had freed Norway from the Danish yoke; and young Sveinn Fork-beard, the future conqueror of England, was strongly suspected of designs on the new-won independence of the land.

One morning, when snow lay a foot deep on the ground, Hakon called Einar to him. The earl's face was haggard from lack of sleep and furrowed with thought.

"Let us ride to Orm Lyrgia's," he said abruptly. "Three months have passed since we enjoyed his hospitality, and we have never thanked him. Kark has saddled the horses."

The resolve, sudden as it was, was puzzling enough; but Einar set it down to a wish to break the monotony of the Winter-bound court. When he descended to the garth with Hakon, he was chagrined to see three horses ready and Kark clothed in furs for the journey. But the slave rode well behind them all the way, so that Einar was free from the sight of him.

Orm and his lovely wife received them cordially enough. Orm in particular seemed delighted with the honor of a visit from the earl, and both rejoiced to see Einar again; but Gudrun's face clouded faintly as the earl took her hand. When hot food and ale had been set before them, at a table moved close to the fire-pit, Hakon summoned Kark and, taking from him a deerskin bag, laid it on Orm's knees.

"I have not been so forgetful of your hospitality as I must have seemed," he began graciously. "In return for your good mead, thrice welcome to a man weary with fighting, wounded and thirsty, I give you a cup. If it is not to your liking, I will fill it with gold."

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Thanking him gratefully, Orm drew from the bag a tall goblet of beaten gold, its designs representing slain heroes drinking with the gods in Valhalla. As he gazed at the rich gift, Orm's face flushed with pride; but Gudrun grew more troubled.

After healths had been drunk in the golden cup, Hakon rose; whereupon Orm begged leave to say a few words apart to Einar. Drawing his foster-brother aside, Orm said to him in a low voice, his face grown anxious:

"There is whispering in the land over Bryniolf's slaying; for all men know well that it was he, and not outlaws, whom you killed in the wood. No one blames you, but I think there will be trouble, if it has not come already. Your grandfather, Styrkar, knows as much as I, for I am a peasant and may not betray the counsels of the peasants. He wishes to see you as soon as may be."

All the doubt, all the bitterness, which the last months, so filled with Hakon's kindness, had driven from him, came surging back into Einar's heart. He strove to hide his feelings; but Hakon, who was watching the young man closely, saw that he was disturbed and asked whether anything were amiss. Then, knowing that he must keep this thing from Hakon till he was sure of his ground, Einar deceived his master for the first time.

"My grandfather is sick," he answered, "and sends for me."

"Let me go with you," the earl urged courteously. "It is long since I have seen Styrkar, and I should be unkind if I neglected him in his illness."

But this could not be. Einar protested that the old man was on the road to recovery, that his message merely concerned matters of business on the estate, which was suffering from lack of care.

"I shall be gone but a day at most," he assured.

"Then, if Orm is willing, I will bide here till you return, and ride back with you," the earl answered.

Orm gave willing assent; but there was something joyful, something of relief, in Hakon's tone which puzzled Einar.

Gimsar was but two miles north of Orm's dwelling at Medalhus; yet Einar's horse, already weary, was fatigued before he reached it, for the river, swift at the ford at all times, now ran ice-cold between shelves of ice not heavy enough to bear, but sufficiently thick to cumber him. The short Winter day was well past before Einar stabled the tired animal in the barns of his own home.

In the smoke-blackened hall, which was as large as Hakon's own and two centuries older, he found his grandfather sitting close to the smoky fire, drinking strong ale. The old soldier was as tall as Einar himself, and as erect, though thin hair and a bushy beard formed a white frame about his scarred, lined face. His eyes, wide-set above bony cheeks, were as keenly, coldly blue as the fiord itself. He rose, put a huge arm about his grandson's shoulders and kissed him on both cheeks. For several minutes neither said a word; then—

"Where got you that sword?" Styrkar asked, pointing to the jeweled hilt that glistened at Einar's waist.

EINAR was surprized at the question.

"It is common report that I had it from Hakon Jarl," he answered.

"Do you mean to use it against Hakon's enemies?"

"Against whom else?" the boy replied in astonishment.

"What if his enemies are your friends?"

Now Einar saw the drift of his grandfather's questions and realized that Styrkar referred to the peasants; but both courtesy and discretion demanded that he continue the game of question and answer till the old man saw fit to enlighten him. So he merely asked—

"Can such things be?"

Styrkar walked cautiously to the door, made sure no one could overhear them and returned to the fire.

"Would you have thought Bryniolf your enemy, if you had known the true reason for his attack on the earl?" he asked.

Einar started.

"Then what men say is true?"

Although he knew it was true, he would have given much to be told it was false.

"It is true."

Einar thought long; at last he said:

"Bryniolf was a friend of our house, a protector of the peasants, and in all matters until this last a true Norwegian. He was greatly wronged, and against another would have been right to seek revenge. But Hakon is the pillar upon which the

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peace and strength of Norway rest. He freed the land; he upholds its religion. If he falls, Norway falls, since there is no one left of the true blood of Harald Fair-hair to be our king.

"Therefore to draw sword against the earl, no matter what the cause, is treason; and while I wear this sword, I will use it against traitors, however near and dear to me they may be." And, folding his arms, he looked straight into the old man's cold eyes.

But Styrkar smiled his tight-lipped smile and clapped him on the shoulder.

"So should one of the house of Gimsar speak!" he exclaimed proudly. "And since you have spoken so, I will tell you what otherwise you would never have heard from me:

"All the peasants of Thrandheim, through their chief men assembled in secret council, have determined to rise against Hakon and to hurl him from the throne. Many are his ill-deeds against them; many are the free women he has stolen and shamed. Though he freed us from the Dane and from the sons of Eric Blood-ax, when did the Danes or Eric's sons ever tax the peasants as he has done? The gifts with which he enriches his officers—the very sword you wear—were bought with money wrung from the poor. Nay, do not speak till I have done. Our people, dazzled by Hakon's victories, rejoicing in their freedom from the foreign yoke, would have endured even greater taxes than he has dared levy; but they will not endure the violation of their homes. You know the pride of the Thrandheim men.

"Three months back, the plans of the peasants took shape. Their wealthiest and wisest men met in a secret place in the forest of South Gaulardale and there split up the black arrow as a sign that they renounced their loyalty to the earl. There would have been open war before this, but that two parties arose amongst them, and they bickered long. The one party, led by Ulf Wry-lip, Bryniolf's brother, wishing to be rid of Hakon at all costs, urged that Sveinn, the Danish king, be invited to help them with his fleet.

"The other, including all the wiser heads, contended that an alliance with Sveinn would mean a return to the Danish yoke from which Hakon had freed them. 'Let it be so!' cried Ulf. 'When the Danes have plundered for a while, they will let us be; while Hakon takes from us lands, money and women whenever he desires. Better pay toll once than eat shame all our lives.'

"The meeting broke up in disorder, as have other meetings since. Yet all are so set against Hakon that none of the milder party will betray their opponents. Two days ago, Ulf Wry-lip came to me, for he knew both my friendship for the peasants and the strength of my influence. He told me that his party has concluded its preparations; that Sveinn has promised his aid and has secured other forces as strong as his own. These are the Jomsborg vikings."

Styrkar paused a moment to let his words sink in. White to the lips, Einar cried:

"The Jomsborg vikings! May the gods curse them who would loose such wolves against our peaceful land!"

"Listen. Sveinn, as you know, rebelled against his own father, slew him and seized his kingdom. Sveinn is a Christian, and they say that the religion of Christ is one of peace and mercy; yet he dared a deed that we who worship Odin shudder at. The Jomsborg men, too, are Christians, and as bloody thieves as ever cut helpless throats. If they conquer Hakon, you know what will follow. Sveinn and the vikings will divide this land between them and will thrust Christianity upon us with the sword.

"There are many among us who love the old gods little and declare that the tales concerning them are old women's chatter; but none of us wishes to take upon him a new faith at the command of murderers and pirates. Hakon himself was forced to accept Christianity while the Christ-worshiping sons of Eric ruled; but when he overthrew them, did he not return to the old faith and sacrifice to his patron goddess, Thorgerd Holgabrud, till the altars ran red with blood?

"Well, at the Yule sacrifice, Sveinn of Denmark held his inheritance-feast; and to it he invited the chiefs of the Jomsborg butchers: Palnatoki Jarl, Sigvaldi the war-chief, Bui the Thick, Vagn Red-ax, and all the other wolves of the sea. Like the crafty fox he is, Sveinn had pondered well the invitation of Ulf and the more restless peasants, and had formed a cunning plan. The vikings had long been threatening

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Denmark; by turning them against Hakon, he could both rid himself of their menace and weaken his Norwegian rival. So he plied the Jomsborgers with strong ale till they were well drunk, giving them ever to drink from the biggest cups, till they were ready for any madness.

"Then, rising from his seat, he told them our peasants were ready to rise against Hakon, and how rich our land has become in the years of peace under the earl. Pretending to care little for the Norwegian enterprise himself, the Dane King told how he was minded to gather his fleets for an attack on England, where, to be sure, the plunder was not so rich as in Norway, but was enough. Then he let the Jomsborgers chew on that for a while and, taking his father's high seat, drank off the cup of memory, in which the sea-wolves joined him.

"After that they drank to their God, Christ, and then to Michael. By that time the gleaming eyes of his guests told Sveinn the plot was ripe; and, filling a full flagon, he swore that ere three Winters were past he would bring a host to England and either slay King Ethelred or drive him from his land. Straightway the Jomsborg high chief, Sigvaldi, arose and vowed that ere the Summer was past he would come into Norway and either kill Earl Hakon or drive him from the land. And one after the other, those chiefs swore to follow him against our earl and never flee till Norway should be theirs.

"So thus stands the game. In the Spring the Jomsborg fleet will be upon us, the wilder wing of the peasants will rise, and the land will be drenched in blood and bound in slavery. It is to this pass that the intrigues of Hakon have brought us!

"All this Ulf told me, being sure that I would not betray him. The fool offered me the earldom in Hakon's place if I would help him. I sent him away with fair words and speedily sent for Orm Lyrgia. He knows of the plan; and though he will not further it, he is himself too much a peasant to betray it. But he agreed to send for you. You have much weight with Hakon: tell him of the plot, but do not reveal the names of any peasants involved in it, lest he slay them.

"Entreat him to lay aside his follies, to pay an ample weregild to the kindred of Bryniolf in atonement for his shame and slaughter, and to placate the peasants at any cost. If he will do this, he may separate them from their alliance with the men of Jomsborg; and then Hakon can deal with the vikings with a chance for victory. I think that Sveinn is in earnest about this war on England and will not risk a ship against us."

Einar sat down and buried his face in his hands. It took time for him to digest these weighty happenings. Though he was used to fighting, statecraft was new to him; and he felt unequal to the task, so clearly thrust upon him, of saving Norway. The very name of Jomsborg made the matter the more terrible. These vikings were men from all the Northern lands, wild adventurers thrust out for their crimes from even the tolerant society of the free and savage North. They were banded together in a powerful, secret brotherhood, o prey on the shores of every country within reach of their island lair on the Wendish coast.

In earlier times they attacked only the wealthy, preferably the tyrant kings whom Harald Fairhair had finally subdued: in those days Jomsborg was a Northern order of chivalry, pledged to spare the weak, to help the helpless, to observe chastity and truth. But their vows were now forgotten, all except that oath which pledged them never to flee; they had turned thieves and oppressors, but had retained all their ancient fury in battle. More feared than the cruel legions of Germany, more hated than the Tatars, they turned their bloody hands against all men; and they had never been beaten.

Suddenly Einar sprang to his feet, his face stern with purpose.

"I will do this thing!" he cried in ringing tones and ran from the hall.

"Bide!" the old man called after him. "You are weary, and must rest!"

"I go tonight!" Einar flung over his shoulder.

IN THE dead of night Hakon was rudely roused from sleep by a heavy hand on his shoulder. He leaped from bed, reaching for his sword; but his arms were seized, and he felt himself irresistibly drawn toward the stair.

"It is I, Einar!" a voice whispered. "Come away quickly! Norway slips from your hand!"

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Kark was roused now, and struck a light with flint and steel. Angry, confused, the earl hastily put on his clothes, hurling questions at Einar the while; but the young man pointed to Kark and put his finger on his lips. As they descended to the hall, Orm Lyrgia, who had not gone to bed, met them with a light. Catching Einar's eye, he nodded and waited for the earl to speak. Stammering a few words about sudden business, Hakon ran straight to the stable, Kark keeping by his side with the torch.

Einar spoke no word till they had crossed the river and were well on the road back to Ladir. Then, turning to Kark, he cried:

"Drop behind, dog, and come no nearer than fifty paces!"

Hakon stared at him in surprize, but he offered no explanation till the slave was hidden by the dark. Then he broke forth, his words tumbling one after another like the waters of the Gaul in flood. He heeded no interruptions; he respected not the earl's secret scandals; he spoke forth with all the long-repressed bitterness of his heart. Twice Hakon cried out upon him in anger, but Einar did not even slow his speech. When he had finished, the mighty lord of Norway knew well in what esteem his evil deeds were held by his people, how the peasants cursed him and his own nobles jeered at him behind his back.

He knew, too, that it was Kark whose loose tongue had revealed the things he had kept hidden, Kark, to whom he had confided all that was in his heart. And he knew the peril in which he and his land stood, knew it far better than Einar. For Hakon was familiar with the chiefs of Jomsborg and realized how great was their might, how merciless they were.

When all was said, the earl rode on in silence till they caught the winking gleam of the torches at the guarded gates of the court. Then, turning to Einar, he spoke gravely, almost gently:

"Thou hast spoken to me words that must be paid either with death or with full confidence; thou hast said that which no other man would dare say to Hakon Jarl. There is a loyalty, a love of country, which is greater than fear or respect for titles and power. Thou hast that loyalty and that love. Tomorrow I will proclaim a general assembly of the people; and before them all I will confess my misdeeds, swearing never to offend again. I will tell them of the danger which threatens our land, and urge them to rally against the enemy. Moreover, from now on I will never have a secret from thee, but will take thee to be my companion and counsellor; for thou art faithful."

His words were earnest, the clasp of his hand was firm; yet, as Einar caught the gleam of his eyes in the nearing light of the torches, their steadiness seemed to change, their glance to waver, to grow shifty and cunning. But Einar was young, was off his guard with emotion; and he believed.

CHAPTER VI

JOMSBORG STRIKES

IT WAS a stormy meeting, that assemblage of the Allthing, or popular council of Thrandheim, that met eight days later in response to the summons of Hakon. The other districts of Norway were not invited to participate, for it was the men of Thrandheim who were principally concerned, both because it was they whom Hakon had particularly wronged, and because in that region alone the conspiracy against him had been hatched. The earl, since he first established his capital at Ladir, had never been outside the district in person save to make war on the enemies of the kingdom; and the other districts had never suffered worse affronts than the levy of heavy taxes. Thrandheim was the largest and most populous region in the whole country; its peasants were the sturdiest, the best armed and the most independent; it had made and unmade kings from the time of Harald Fair-hair, and was likely to again.

The Allthing was held in the broad plain of the river Nid, within sight of the roofs of Ladir. It was cold work, standing in the snow for hours; consequently every man wore his great cloak of deerskin or of warm fur and kept it tightly clasped about him. The plain was alive with men. Every peasant who could walk or ride was there; for though the conspirators knew that if Hakon should learn of their plot, he would be likely to set his armored guardsmen on them, they were anxious to learn whether he knew or not, and to hear what

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he had to say. Every man recognized that that meeting would settle the fate of Norway.

The representatives of each town, village, or countryside stood by themselves, the chief of each local unit in the midst of its front rank. The faces of all were dark and sullen, defiantly ready for any trick that the wily earl might try upon them. Upper Gaulardale was led by Styrkar of Gimsar, who alone of the entire host seemed cheerful.

At high noon Hakon took his place in the center of the throng, which made way to let him pass. As soon as he appeared, a stir of excited surprize rippled through the crowd, for they had expected him to come at the head of a band of warriors; and lo—he was attended by one man only—Einar Thumb-shaker. Each of the two men had his sword-belt girded on outside his cloak, that all might see their scabbards were empty. In this way they proclaimed their strict obedience to the law, which provided that no man should come to the Allthing armed; but heretofore the law had been held not to apply to the ruler of the land.

All waited with breathless attention for Hakon's first words. The atmosphere was tense with suspicion, with possible catastrophe. The earl took his place, bared his head and began:

"Men of Norway, I have called you together to hear a promise and a prayer. First, the promise. As ye all know, there are some among you whom I have offended grievously, upon whom I have put the greatest of all shames: the shame of a violated hearth. For my fault I ask your forgiveness; I offer you full atonement in gold or in cattle, as the law of the land provides. But repentance is idle unless it prevents further ill; therefore I swear, here before you all, that henceforth none of you shall have cause to complain of me.

"This is the prayer: It has come to my ears that some of you, driven thereto by wrongs I have put upon you, have made a compact against me with the King of the Danes. I have heard that Sveinn, daring not to come himself, has stirred up the Jomsborg vikings, whose ships will be upon us in the Spring. Ye know the Jomsborg vikings, who are both Christian and pitiless. Do ye desire that they rule you in my place?"

A vast murmur of astonishment and consternation arose among the people: the conspirators were astounded that he knew of their plan, the others that such a thing could come to pass; and even the conspirators, of whom only Ulf Wry-lip was aware that Sveinn had brought the vikings into the affair, were dismayed at the news. Seeing that the impression thus made was favorable to him, Hakon went on:

"Not for myself do I fear. Ye are familiar with my battles, with my many toils and labors; and none of you has ever heard that Hakon was afraid. But I fear for you, I fear for Norway when these bloodthirsty wolves of the sea fall upon you, pretending to free you from me. Their swords, once unsheathed, will not seek the scabbards again till your blood is washed out with your tears.

"Therefore I pray you, as you love your land and your homes, that you will for a little while forget the wrongs I have done you, which I will never more repeat, and that ye join your arms and your breasts to mine in repelling from our common country the wolves that would tear her in pieces. As I have led you to victory before, so I will do again. Follow me to battle, and henceforth I will be to you as a just and loving father."

He ceased speaking and for a moment no man stirred. Then up rose Aslak of Saltness, a wealthy fisher of the fiord, and scowled darkly at the earl.

"How know we," he sneered openly, "that this tale of the Jomsborg vikings is true? What proof is there?"

Einar, seeing well that Aslak was of the more turbulent party which had invited in the Danes, grew angry and cried aloud—

"I swear that it is true: ye know me for an honest man and a friend of the peasants."

"We know you for a pampered darling of the earl's, whose service has made you rich," Aslak called back at him.

Before the hot words on Einar's lips could be uttered, Styrkar of Gimsar raised his voice.

"It is true," he said. "If any doubt my word, let him speak."

But none spoke; partly because truth was evident in his voice, and partly because his terrible eyes told them that he who doubted would be given the chance to face the fierce old man in a duel. Aged as he was, Styrkar was still one of the best swordsmen in the land.

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Then the word passed to Asbiorn of Oglo, a towering man of middle age, with a kindly, frank face.

"I counsel," he said, "that we accept the earl's word, follow him to battle and rid Norway of her enemies. But first let Hakon Jarl pay to Brynjolf's heirs full weregild, to the amount determined by the Allthing, for the wrong put upon our slain comrade."

The majority of those present clapped their hands loudly, crying:

"Good words! Good words!"

But many stood silent, scowling, for they were of Aslak's side. Old Styrkar, glancing about him with roving eyes, noticed that those who scowled placed their hands on the fastenings of their long cloaks. But one among them was not silent. Ulf Wry-lip, brother of the dead Brynjolf, shouldered forward through the press and cried:

"You may pay for blood with money, Hakon Jarl, but you can not buy honor with it. We have come here not to listen to your promises and prayers, but to wipe the stain from our honor. If we support you now against the Jomsborg vikings, and you prevail against them, then you will grow proud again, and be as you were before. Our homes and our wives will still be your spoil; and there will be none to gainsay you, for all Norway will be so drunk with the joy of your victory, or so frightened by it, that no man will dare raise a hand against you. I counsel that we take this earl now and remove him from his earldom, that we feed his carcass to the ravens and then proceed against the Jomsborg vikings ourselves, as free men!"

NOW it was the pro-Danish party which shouted; but their outcries were drowned by the hoots of disapproval which poured from the majority. Yet it was plain, from the faces of the peasants, that some effect had been produced by Ulf's intimation that victory would leave Hakon free to resume his evil ways, and themselves helpless to prevent it.

But once more Styrkar thrust himself into the breach.

"Ye men of Thrandheim," he addressed them, "I am a friend of the people and a chief of the land. Therefore there is more sense in me than in this ravening Ulf, who plays only for his own hand, and would sell all Norway for his private revenge. Loud as he prates of his honor, ye have yet to find him a more honorable man than I, who counsel caution. There is one way to make sure that Hakon will keep his word to us and live cleanly henceforth, for there is one oath he will not break. Let him swear by Thorgerd Holgabrud that he will abide by his promise to us; then we will follow him against the vikings, or against the fiends of Surt themselves."

Now both parties joined in a tumult of applause, excepting only Ulf and a small band immediately about him. But before Hakon could reply to the proposal, Styrkar shouted in a voice of thunder:

"Behold! See what Ulf carries beneath his cloak!"

And lo! the fastening of Ulf's heavy mantle had broken apart; and there, plain for all men to see, shone at his girdle the polished head of an ax.

"He carries weapons to the Allthing!" Styrkar cried again. "He has broken the law, and the penalty is death! Now hear me once more, ye chiefs and freemen: this same Ulf came to me but a few days ago, and broached to me his plan of turning the Danes and the sea-thieves loose upon us. It seems he did not tell you that the vikings were coming; nay, he told that not to his own party. He has plotted slaughter for us all—all, at least, save himself and me; for to me he offered the rank of earl in Hakon's place, if I would lend him my help and the weight of my name.

"Ye know that it is unlawful for any man to be made earl save by the free election of the landholders, regularly assembled in the Allthing. Twice, then, has he offended against the law, and has brought Jomsborg down upon us as well!"

The peasants burst into loud yells of execration and crowded about Ulf, crying with one voice:

"Slay him! Slay him!"

But Hakon threw himself among them, brushing them aside with his great arms and calling upon them to observe the sacred peace of the Allthing. In a little they came to their senses, though Ulf and his companions were roughly handled, and in the scuffle it was seen that all with him had come armed.

When silence was restored, the earl addressed Ulf, who stood struggling in the grip of two angry peasants—

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"I forgive all your other misdeeds, for I have done injury to your house; but why came you to the Allthing with weapons?"

Unabashed, Ulf glowered at him.

"To slay thee, Hakon," he retorted.

Hakon turned to the people.

"Sentence of death might be passed on this man," he declared; "but that ye may know I repent my misdeeds in very truth and desire to bring no more violence upon you, I spare his life. It is my purpose from this time on to shed no blood but that of Norway's foes. But is there not among you some other who has broken the law of the Allthing by bearing arms hither?"

A burly farmer from the upper Gaul stepped forward, his head hanging with shame.

"I have borne weapons," he confessed and, throwing open his cloak, he detached a sword from his girdle and flung it at Hakon's feet. A moment passed, a moment of utter silence: then, first one by one, then in little groups, and at last in whole ranks, men drew near and laid down the weapons they had hidden under their mantles. When the last man had disarmed himself, the heap of swords and axes would have armed two thousand warriors.

"Truly a host came here to slay me," Hakon said, a sad smile playing on his lips. "But I blame ye not. I have earned your hate. It is settled now, is it not, that ye will accept my promise and go with me to fight the vikings?"

Never before had Hakon seemed so great to Einar, not even in the days before Kark's sneering revelations had thrown the first shadow across his soul; not even when he worshiped the earl for his kindness, for his valor and liberality, knowing nothing of the secret stain in his heart. Now Hakon stood victorious, by moral courage and sincere penitence alone, over a host of armed men; having conquered himself, he had conquered a revolt. Truly, Einar thought, this earl can be the greatest man that walks the earth!

But Styrkar was not yet content. Having saved the day by his courageous loyalty to the earl, he now showed his loyalty to the peasants.

"The earl has promised, but where is his oath?" he demanded. "It was agreed that he should swear by Thorgerd Holgabrud to keep his promise to us!"

Hakon turned pale before them all. Thorgerd Holgabrud, the special goddess of the wild race that dwelt in Halogaland, was his patroness, whose favor he regarded above that of Odin, Thor and all the greatest gods. His dark, superstitious soul inclined him naturally to bloody rites and secret mysteries; in her terrible worship he found the only satisfaction for the savagry of his strangely warped religious instinct. It was known that he prayed to her for victory, that he feared her so much that he had offered her human sacrifices; and it was certain that any oath he swore in her name would be kept.

With something of the same awe that was clearly oppressing Hakon's heart, the whole people turned their faces toward their earl, waiting. He saw, he knew that they would require the oath now; and for some reason hidden in his dark heart, he shivered, and his strong knees quaked. But, mastering his emotion with an effort, he raised both hands on high, and in a clear, firm voice he cried:

"Thorgerd Holgabrud, Goddess of Death and of Victory, hear and record my oath, in thy dread name. By thee I swear that I will nevermore wrong any man's wife, nor any woman that dwells in his house; that I will nevermore do injury to any of my people, nor place upon them burdens heavier than they can bear. And, if I break my oath, do thou bring upon me shame and sorrow greater than I have ever inflicted on another, aye, even to destruction!"

As he finished, there rose about him the joyful tumult of a people relieved from the long anguish of perpetual fear, mingled with the ringing Thrandheim battle-cry, foreboding disaster to Norway's enemies. Einar, with a word of excuse to his lord, strode proudly down to where his grandfather stood among the cheering throng, and shook the old man's hand in a transport of happiness.

But without a word to any man, his face colorless, his head hanging, Hakon Jarl passed slowly through the peasant ranks to his hall.

WITH the first green and the first long days of Spring Hakon had his long-ships thrust out into the fiord; his armorers completed the long task of making and repairing helmets and shirts

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of mail and forging weapons; his provisions were piled on the beach, his house-carles equipped and ready. The war-arrow had gone out a full week before; but the peasant levies were always slow, and many of them had far to come. For two weeks more they poured into the low region about Ladir, till nearly thirty thousand men were waiting to embark.

His preparations for departure completed, Einar went with an anxious heart to the bower to bid farewell to Bergliot. Though she had shown him little more than the grave courtesy with which she treated all her father's courtiers, he was sure that any kindness she might feel for him would be apparent now, on the eve of his departure upon a perilous undertaking. And he was right; for as she rose to greet him, there was more than her usual seriousness in her clear voice, more than mere friendship in her eyes.

A slender, well-made boy of twelve came forward with her, his child's body clothed in fine armor, a man's sword by his side. This was Erling, Hakon's youngest son, a soft-eyed lad with wistful features.

Giving her hand to Einar, Bergliot spoke with unwonted feeling, almost a hint of tenderness:

"It is your first expedition, Einar?"

"Aye, Lady Bergliot." He was embarrassed, and the words did not come easily.

"You will bear yourself like a man, I know; for you have proved your worth already. Will you undertake a task for my sake?"

In his eager fervor, Einar's throat burned and his voice quivered.

"You have only to ask: I will do anything."

She put one shapely arm about the boy by her side.

"Watch over my little brother Erling," she entreated. "Watch over him as you would over me. My father will not listen to my prayers to leave him at home; it is his wish that Erling learn the deeds of a man and a warrior. I know my father loves him and will care for him as best he can; but somehow I am uneasy for him. If the earl insists that he join the battle, guard his life with all your strength."

Einar was deeply moved. He thought he knew the reason for the request. Hakon's other warriors, hardened veterans, would have no thought for anything but the battle. He, too, longed with all the ardor of his young heart to throw himself into the thick of fighting; but Bergliot had recognized the devotion which he felt toward her, and knew that he would think of her even in the thickest press of battle, would heed her request in his heart while he fought.

But he did not realize that she had discovered in him a pureness of soul, an unselfish loyalty such as distinguished no other man in the court, and that of them all she trusted him alone. Fervently he swore that he would guard the boy as his own eye, come what might; and Bergliot thanked him, almost with tears in her eyes.

"Remember," she told him, "Erling is dearer than life to me."

Little Erling broke away from her clinging arm and stood stiff, and straight before the archer.

"Thumb-shaker," he said stoutly, "you need not trouble yourself for me. Never mind what my sister says: she is but a woman. If I bear myself not in manly fashion, strike me to the heart with your sword."

Einar concealed the smile that twitched on his lips.

"No one doubts your manhood, Erling Hakonson," he said, giving the boy his father's name, as if he were a proved warrior; "but you will let me make the promise to please your sister, will you not?"

Erling nodded.

"Women must be humored," he said with an air of manly superiority.

Laughing, Bergliot kissed him, then laid her hand on Einar's shoulder.

"Remember the promise you gave me when I bound that sword by your side. Use it well, and stain it not with cruel deeds. Bring it back in honor, or return not at all. Yet I know you will acquit yourself bravely and cleanly, Einar, for there is the spirit of a clean man in your eyes. Farewell; take care of Erling. I shall think often of you."

His heart beating high, Einar kissed her hand and turned to go. Snatching little Erling to her, Bergliot kissed him again and again, to his intense disgust. Then, his hand on his sword-hilt, the child strode out after Einar, imitating his walk as well as he could; and the two went down to the ships.

At the last moment, when the troops

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were actually going aboard, the sound of a war-trumpet pealed from the Strind road; and, swinging along in splendid unison, the trained professional fighting-men of Eric the Young double-timed past the garth and down to the shore. They had marched, by easy stages it is true, all the way from Raumrealm, a good two hundred miles, the first stage of the way through the last snows; and they were gaunt and weary.

But, way-worn as they were, Eric and his sixty men would not be dissuaded from the glory of this new adventure and amid the ringing cheers of the host they ascended the gang-plank of the young prince's own ship, the *Green Dragon*. Hakon Jarl was proud of his son that day and the youth's high spirit heartened the whole host, which, for all its numbers, felt none too confident of the outcome. The name of the Jomsborg vikings was a terror to the land.

THEY sailed first along the coast of North Mere, putting in at Solskel to wait for news of the vikings and gather recruits from among the stout Meresmen. A week they were there; then, toward the end of a crisp blue afternoon, a sail was reported to the south of the islands. Two swift cruisers rowed out to intercept the strange craft; and while Hakon sat at his evening meal in his tent his guardsmen brought in the captain and owner of the vessel, a cutter of twelve oars. The man was pale and haggard and had a long blue cloak wrapped about him.

Hakon, surrounded by the chief officers of his fleet, scrutinized him keenly.

"Whence are you, and what are you called?" he asked. "Do you bring tidings?"

"One question at a time, Lord Earl," the man replied wearily. "My name is Geirmund; I come from Oslo in Vingulmark, far to the southeast. I bring tidings indeed; the Jomsborg vikings have come to your shores with a great fleet: they landed first at the Limfiord and from there sailed west along the land, stopping only to burn, plunder and slay. Hundreds of your peasants they have killed, they have carried off many women and are robbing far and wide.

"From one port to another they dash as swift as wind and oars will carry them, and each port they leave in blood and ashes. They have sworn to kill you and every great chief in Norway. Vagn Red-ax has vowed to slay Thorkel Leira and carry off his daughter Ingeborg without the consent of her kindred."

Now Thorkel stood by the earl, and at this saying he laughed grimly, showing his teeth.

"Have you any token to prove your tale?" Hakon asked.

"Aye, a true token." And Geirmund drew from the folds of his cloak his right arm, whereof the hand was smitten off at the wrist.

Hakon's eyes narrowed.

"Where did that happen?" he questioned.

"At Staffness. But they sail swiftly and are very eager for battle; wherefore I think it will not be long before they fall upon you."

Rising, Hakon made Geirmund sit in his own seat, and bade Kark set food before him at once. Sulkily Kark obeyed; the slave had been naught but sulky since Hakon's Winter ride from Orm Lyrgia's, for the earl had had him whipped for his loose tongue till the hide was fairly peeled from his back.

At dawn the fleet, divided into three squadrons, set sail for the south, proceeding through every fiord down the deeply indented coast, in along one shore and out along the other, so that not even a fishing-boat escaped its vigilence. But at Bear Isle, off the coast of South Mere, Hakon reunited his squadrons and rode at anchor; for he thought that the Jomsborg men were about due to arrive.

Herein he proved his wisdom. The ships had scarcely anchored when a small boat rowed ou from behind the island and a fisherman was brought on board with word that the vikings were not three miles away, south of and hidden by Hod Isle. At once the fleet weighed anchor and, keeping well out of sight behind the cliff-girt archipelago, rowed south for two miles, into the mouth of Hiorunga Bay. The bay was a long, deep fiord sheltered by two fair-sized islands, just north of Hod Isle itself.

Here, the morning being half-gone, Hakon drew up his fleet in three divisions, one under himself, one commanded by Eric the Young, and the third in charge of Sveinn the Black, Hakon's second son. Gudbrand the White and Thorkel Leira each led thirty ships under Eric; Thorleif

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the Wise and Skopti of the Tidings each thirty under Sveinn; Hakon's own squadron-commanders were Thorir Hart and Styrkar of Gimsar, who had come out at the head of the peasant levy. To Einar's intense delight and pride, he was given the post of first archer on Hakon's own ship, the *Maiden*.

Almost at high noon a great ship-of-war, crimson-painted, shot round the south end of the island; and a yell went up from its savage crew at sight of the waiting battle-line. One after another, it was followed by others, till full sixty long-ships lay off the entrance to the bay, their sides flinging back the light from the rows of brass-bound shields along their gunwales. Sail after sail was lowered and at last, under bare poles, the viking ships rowed slowly to meet the Norwegian fleet. The Thrandheimers could not refrain from cheering as the Jomsborg ships swept dauntlessly toward them; for, though the pirate vessels were higher and larger than any in Hakon's host, yet altogether they were outnumbered nearly three to one.

At thrice the distance of a bowshot the vikings rested on their oars. So even had been their stroke that all sixty ships lay almost side by side across the bay. Silence fell, so intense that the rubbing of oars against leather thongs could be heard as the pirates slowly warped their craft closer. Then, drawing in the oars, they made fast each to its neighbor with grapnels, drew the hulls together and held them, while sure-footed seamen ran out upon the stems with cables and bound the ships together to form a floating fortress on the fiord.

"Now we might fall upon them while they are binding their craft together, and drive them into disorder," Einar said.

He spoke to himself, but the silence was so absolute that his voice rang out like a trumpet-call.

A spearman in the waist threw back his head and laughed.

"What," he mocked, "and let those still unbound get loose to flee? You will know better when your beard is grown, youngster."

But Hakon Jarl, standing near with little Erling at his side, had overheard.

"Your beard is so thick that it clogs your wits," he smiled. "There will be small fleeing this day. The Jomsborg men will fight till the sea is red with blood."

CHAPTER VII

HIORUNGA BAY

STILL the Norsemen lay in three flotillas. For a time the vikings waited, choosing, since theirs was the smaller force, to let Hakon attack; but soon it became clear that the earl was not minded to send his lighter ships against that solid bank of heavy hulls and towering sides. So, after they had striven in vain to provoke the Norwegians to assail them by jeers and scornful shouts, Sigvaldi, the high chief of Jomsborg, commanded his officers to divide the fleet.

"This pack of dogs fears to close," he mocked. "We will separate our squadrons, so that they may get at us the more easily; else will they flee to land and escape us."

So it was done; the cables binding them together were sheared in two places, so that there was now one division of the ships of Jomsborg over against each one of Norway. For indeed the vikings were eager for killing; and, never having suffered defeat, they feared no odds, being rather afraid that their enemies might lose heart and deny them the joy of battle.

The center of the Jomsborg line was held by Sigvaldi himself, with twenty great dragon-ships against the sixty smaller craft of Hakon; Bui the Thick commanded the left, against Eric the Young, in the same proportion of one to three; and Vagn Red-ax maintained the right wing against the sixty of Sveinn Hakonson. The squadrons once separated, the ebbing tide and the swift run of an off-shore current speedily bore them apart, till nearly a hundred and fifty yards of water lay between them.

Then Hakon sounded his trumpet and, as had been prearranged in anticipation of just such rashness on the vikings' part, the three divisions of the earl bore down upon their foes as fast as oars could urge. In each compartment one man rowed, a second shielded the rower against the enemy's arrows and hurling spears, and a third stood by to strike. From fore-deck to after-deck the crews were so arrayed, the fighting-men armed with long spears, the shield-bearers and oarsmen with weapons on the benches beside them, for use when they drew so near that rowing would no longer be possible.

The after-decks were lined with archers, five abreast, with axmen in full armor

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behind them to take up the fight at close quarters. The fore-decks were held by shield-walls of professional soldiers, Hakon's housecarls, helmeted, mailed and shielded, and armed with swords and axes. Along the fore-and-aft gangways were stationed more archers and men with slings and throwing-spears.

Driven by flashing oar-blades, the nine-score ships of Hakon bore swiftly down upon their outnumbered adversaries, the warriors standing tense, their weapons ready; the bowmen with arrows notched against the strings. At last they were within arrow-range; and a storm of shafts poured simultaneously from the decks of both fleets. But, though their ships were lower and lighter, the men of Thrandheim were so many that they took two lives for every one they gave. Warriors fell clanging to the decks in blood-stained mail, breasts and throats sprouting feathered arrows.

Einar, in the waist of the *Maiden*, shifted his quiver in front of him and sent his shafts so furiously that three had left the string before the first found its mark. In swift succession he loosed them, never turning his eyes from the press of armed foes that lined the bulwarks and manned the decks of Sigvaldi's flagship. For, being in the center of the midmost squadron, the *Maiden* had been driven against Sigvaldi himself, who held the center of the Jomsborg line. Rapidly as he shot, Einar had loosed twelve arrows before he missed at all. Little Erling, standing behind him, flushed with the excitement of battle, danced eagerly up and down, crying—

"Well shot, Thumb-shaker!"

Three arrows had pierced the shield of the viking war-chief, but each was turned by his well-forged mail. Coolly Einar fitted another to the string, placed his feet farther apart and bent his bow till the barb was flush with its outer face. This time he tried a harder mark; the little area of eye and cheekbone which showed between the rim of Sigvaldi's helmet and the rim of his shield; his legs were protected by the high bulwarks.

Deliberately Einar loosed. The shaft flew straight to its mark. But at that moment a tall viking, seeing his leader's peril, flung Sigvaldi to the deck with a wrestling hold and straightway dropped bleeding upon him, Einar's arrow through one eye-socket.

Before the archer could loose again, the opposing ships crashed together with a shock that threw him from his feet. Gathering themselves together, the *Maiden's* crew rushed forward to board, led by their fore-deck men; but instantly, with loud yells, the vikings themselves sprang to the attack. From their higher decks they leaped down upon the *Maiden*, pouring so thickly upon her fore-deck that four or five spilled off into the water. At the same time, the hostile squadrons having joined all along the line, the noise of shouting and the strident clash of steel told that the men of Jomsborg were nowhere waiting for battle to be carried to them.

The men they met were worthy antagonists; Hakon's deck-companies were the finest soldiers that his vast wealth could hire. Firmly they stood, shields together, exchanging stroke for stroke and thrust for thrust. But never before had they met such enemies. The Jomsborgers heeded wounds no more than a flea heeds curses; gashed and bleeding, they piled against the shield-walls, working with blade, with arm and knee, to break through.

More than once a Thrandheim warrior, his sword buried to the hilt in a viking's breast, was cut down by a second foe before he could wrench the weapon free; and over his body the vikings poured through the gap. In the main, they were held; but they forced their way into the waists of fully thirty ships and drove from waist to stern, slaying and being slain. No man asked for mercy and no man gave it.

The *Maiden's* fore-deck, too, was forced, and a score of savage swordsmen charged into the thick of her crew. The oarsmen were now all on their feet, their oars trailing in the water or splintered by the shock of ships, their weapons ready. A shower of javelins thinned the viking horde, but still it came on, surging over rowing-benches, running down the gangways. The bowmen, most of whom were unarmored, gave way before them and fled aft. Snatching up his shield, Einar covered Erling's young body with its circle and drew his sword.

HE WAS none too soon. A skin-clad Wend drove his broad spear-point full against the shield, piercing the metal boss; but the blow was stopped by the iron brace behind. The viking snatched a short ax from his belt, but before

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he could use it Einar swung his sword and the pirate's head rolled to the planking. Three of his comrades closed upon the archer and the little prince, their points menacing. With a swift slash Einar severed the sword-arm of one at the elbow, turned, caught the throat of the second with his point and wrenched his blade out dripping.

But he was at a double disadvantage; for outnumbered, he was forced to expose his own breast to keep little Erling shielded. A heavy blow ground against the steel rings covering his breast, but the good mail held and instantly the two blades met. All about them the planks were slippery with blood; the hold was ringing with shouts and groans and the clang of steel on steel. Twice more he struck, but the viking guarded well. Summoning all his strength, Einar drove home his blade, disregarding a red flash before his eyes and the blood that dripped from his torn cheek. His good sword crunched through the viking's helmet, cut through the skull to the teeth and the man fell without a quiver.

As he freed his blade, Einar turned suddenly, catching the gleam of steel at his side. But there came an answering gleam from behind and at his feet rolled the man whose right arm he had severed, his throat spouting blood. The ship was clear once more; its hull was cluttered with dead, but no living enemy stood upon it. And by Einar's side stood the boy Erling, his eyes aflame with pride, his sword crimson.

"Well have you shielded my life, O Einar," he exulted, "but Hakon's sons pay their debts!" He pointed to the one-armed corpse, which still clutched its knife. "Had I not been here, thou hadst never drawn bow again!"

"The young eagle has sharp claws and drinks deep," Einar complimented him. "I thank thee; it was a brave deed."

Sigvaldi's squadron had suffered sorely and was still suffering. Its first wild attack repulsed, its crews retreated helter-skelter to their own ships; but many were cut down by the following Thrandheimers as they strove to scale their own high bulwarks. Here and there the vessels had drifted apart, and then there was no retreat; the vikings turned like wolves at bay and died fighting. Nor did they ever fail, where they could come to grips, to take three lives for two. Those who got safely back were hotly pursued, and the Norsemen boarded in their turn.

This was easier now, for the multitude of Hakon's long-ships not only encountered, but drove between the thinner squadrons of Jomsborg and poured hosts of warriors aboard them from both sides. But still the lashings held which bound together all the viking craft of each division, though the Thrandheimers strove mightily to force a way to the cables and cut them with their axes. And while the cables held each squadron was still a fortress, from any portion of which reenforcements could be rushed to the weakened places in the line. Though the fighting was now almost entirely on Sigvaldi's squadron or at its edges, the battle was still far from decided.

Hakon had not yet taken part in the struggle. Standing on the after-deck, he watched the fluctuations of the fighting with fierce, mask-like face and guided the defense and the following attack with shouted orders to the company-officers. He had seen Einar's fight against odds, but his expression did not change once till Erling made his first kill. Then he smiled grimly and remarked to the steersman—

"The wolf-cub shows his breed."

But on the Norwegian left wing the fight had not gone so well. Vagn Red-ax, a huge young savage with tossing red hair, inspired his men with his own flaming spirit. Almost half of Sveinn the Black's sixty ships had been stripped of their best warriors; the first attack had cleared them to the waists. As soon as a good part of the men were down in one ship, Vagn cried his pirates on to the next, leaving the former still in the fight, but too weak to take the initiative. In this way the sea-wolf drove fear into the hearts of his foes.

When he had decimated as many crews as he could well handle, he urged his vikings back as they had come, completing the work of destruction. Twenty-one fine ships were floating helpless and gutted; nine more were left with torn and dwindling crews.

At the moment when he knew the Norsemen could stand no more, Vagn suddenly retreated to his own craft, his men following him with yells of triumph. They were no sooner back than he set them to hacking apart the cables that bound the viking stems together and running out the oars. Then, urged on by eager arms, the Jomsborg ships drove in their turn against Sveinn's disorganized division, pushing the Norwegians

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before them and raining darts and arrows down among the Thrandheim crews.

Utterly disheartened, Sveinn Hakonson sounded the retreat. His shattered crews strove frantically to ward off the missiles of the vikings and to back water at the same time; but every succeeding moment flung them into worse confusion. One ship fouled with another; oars crashed together and splintered. Skopti of the Tidings, valiantly stemming the viking advance with the twelve ships that remained to him, was giving the main squadron of Sveinn a brief respite; but as he thrust with a long pike at Vagn, scarce ten feet away on the port side of his vessel, an arrow drove through the old warrior's matted beard and severed the jugular. Panic seized his seamen and the disorder became general.

At that moment rescue came. Eric the Young, commanding Hakon's right wing, had driven back the vikings under Bui the Thick before his impetuous attack, had utterly devastated three of their ships, swept six more with broadsides of arrows and was pressing home his advantage when, from the stem of a boarded Jomsborg galley, he saw the plight of his brother.

Instantly he recalled his men, sprang back into his own *Green Dragon* and hastened with three more galleys to Sveinn's aid. He struck the flank of Vagn's line and boarded with that same daring ferocity which afterward made him the most terrible of Norse sea-kings. His veterans swarmed over the ship which Vagn himself captained, flooding her from the stem and both sides.

The other ships of the pirate squadron backed water and in their haste to come to their leader's aid fouled each other and the ships of both Eric and Sveinn. But the pirates paid no attention to Sveinn just now; their sole thought was to rescue Vagn and his crew, who, overwhelmed by the crushing attack of Eric, were fighting with sullen fury in the waist, their backs to the gunwales. Vagn, who had been at the steering-oar, was cut off by Eric himself and half a score Norsemen.

The pirate captain now stood alone on the fore-deck, his shield gone, slashing right and left at the Thrandheim men who strove to gain a footing on the deck. Desperate as his plight was, Vagn was laughing as he fought, laughing with sheer joy in the conflict and the wounds his great ax dealt. Four men went down before him in swift succession; then, as he gave back before the leaping onrush of two more, Eric the Young reached the deck and struck out at him with dripping sword.

Parrying the blow, Vagn whirled round suddenly and leaped out past the sternpost —a prodigious leap, which carried him over the intervening stretch of water and over the rail of a vessel of his own squadron which had just nosed between him and the nearest of Eric's ships. Even as he sprang, his enemies swept aft after him over the bodies of the last of his crew.

With reckless fury the war-tough men of Eric flung grapnels over the gunwale of a second pirate galley, drew her close and boarded. One after another, they stormed four ships, while Sveinn gathered his courage together, heartened his crews, and reformed his line. He had to abandon several ships altogether, that others might be fully manned; but at last Sveinn returned to the fight with thirty-four complete crews. Smarting with humiliation, he and his men smashed into and fell upon the vikings.

BUT now the tide of battle flowed back upon the right wing and the center. Bui the Thick, as much heartened by the departure of Eric as the Thrandheimers opposing him were weakened by it, cut his ships apart as Vagn had done, urged them in between those of his assailants and, ordering his archers to send in a volley of arrows, followed up the deadly discharge with simultaneous boarding parties, which devastated five galleys. Then, retreating again, he bade his oarsmen row through the breach created by the attack.

The Norsemen gave back in confusion; the victorious shouts of the pirates carried to the ears of Hakon's men in the center and struck their hearts with fear. Sigvaldi and his vikings, emboldened, laid on with redoubled strokes, so that on ship after ship Hakon's crews were driven to the rails. At last Bui succeeded in freeing his galley from the press, drove it between the easternmost ship of Eric and the westernmost of Hakon and stood off two Thrandheim crews at once.

Three men in Bui's company were especially terrible; his brother Sigurd, whose hair was as long and fine as Einar's; Havard the Hewer and Aslak the Grim, both of whom fought with a sword in each hand,

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striking equally skilful blows with right and left. Whoever approached these champions perished; when they advanced, the warriors facing them shrank back in terror and fought half-heartedly. Eric the Young was now nearly back to his original position, and rowing fast to cut in between Bui and another great Jomsborg galley; but the men in the squadron he had left were spent, discouraged and retreating.

Styrkar of Gimsar, his helmet lost in the mêlée, now gathered the bulk of his crew before the mast, and as a few rowers propelled his galley against Sigvaldi's flagship he led his men forward in a charge that swept them up over the Jomsborger's high sides. The pirates met them savagely and a terrific fight began. Hakon, who stood on the after-deck of the *Maiden* beside the helmsman, at once ordered his own dangerously thinned crew to Styrkar's support; and from the other side Sigvaldi's hard-pressed ship was boarded.

Yet the fight was more nearly even than it seemed; for the vikings, heartened by Bui's success, were defending themselves with reckless savagery. Moreover, Hakon's division as a whole had borne onset after onset from the beginning of the battle and was badly shaken.

Once more Einar stood in the waist of the *Maiden*, most of whose crew were fighting on Sigvaldi's flagship against the infuriated pirates. Hakon, with a little group of housecarls, still stood on the after-deck; little Erling bore Einar's shield, while Einar directed a withering discharge upon the ship of Sigvaldi. Wherever his arrows flew, men dropped dead or mortally wounded in mid-stroke. Suddenly, as he notched a shaft, his bowstring parted in the middle and an arrow struck the steel rings on his shoulder. A yell of joy rose from the vikings, who pressed the attack savagely. Nothing that day had galled them so sorely as Einar's unerring shooting.

Havard the Hewer, his two swords sheathed, stood on the fore-deck of Bui's flagship, a bow in his hand. Beholding Einar's consternation, he laughed aloud and cried:

"Thor taught thee to shoot, but Christ taught me, and it is plain that I am the better man!"

With that he spoke to Bui, who nodded between strokes and bellowed an order to his oarsmen. At once the viking galley shot forward, her steersman threw her tiller to port and her bow crashed against the *Maiden's* side. Einar drew his sword; the housecarls of Hakon sprang to the rail; but Havard, Bui and Aslak were already upon them with flashing swords.

His face livid, his lips foaming, Hakon Jarl ran forward to Erling's side just as Havard fell upon Einar. The earl's approach brought joy to Einar's heart; for now he felt he could safely surrender the care of little Erling to the boy's father and give his whole attention to his enemy. Havard's first blow struck his helmet from his head, but the sword broke. Shifting his second sword to his right hand, the viking struck again; but the second of time required by the movement gave Einar his opportunity.

He directed a savage stroke at Havard's arm; the sword turned on the Jomsborger's mail, but its force knocked the weapon from Havard's hand. Before Einar could give him the death-thrust, Havard sprang beneath the blade and caught him round the knees. Both men crashed to the deck together, wrestling for very life.

While his housecarls were dying beneath the fearful strokes of Bui and Aslak, Hakon stood beside his son, his sword still sheathed, his hands raised to the heavens. His eyes rolled like those of a man in a fit; foam trickled between his lips. The words that came from his mouth were a prayer for victory.

"Thorgerd Holgabrud, mighty goddess, desert me not now!" he cried in a shaking voice. "I have given thee blood to drink and corpse-flesh to eat: art thou not satisfied? Give me victory! I will devote to thee the dearest thing I have!"

Prone on his back beneath the weight of Havard, Einar felt the viking's right hand relax its grip, and knew the fingers were reaching for the knife at his girdle. Wrenching free, the archer drove his fist into his enemy's face, then clutched Havard's throat in both hands. Throwing all his strength into one mighty heave, he rolled the viking off, still retaining his grip on the muscular throat and, bending the swollen face backward. A scream came to his ears.

Half-turning, he saw Hakon raise his dagger and plunge it into Erling's breast. With a frenzied cry Einar bent Havard's head sharply back till the bones snapped,

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then sprang to his feet and flung himself upon the earl. But Hakon, his face that of a fiend in torture, heaved the still palpitating body of his son out and over the rail.

Just then Vigfus Glumson, one of three housecarls left alive, stumbled against an anvil fastened to the after-deck, at which some sailor had been riveting his sword-guard before the fight. Noticing what had thrown him, Vigfus rose, wrenched it from its place, poised it on high, and threw it at Aslak the Grim with all his force. The massive block of iron struck the viking full on the head, so that its iron spike drove deep into his brain.

At the same moment, as Hakon reeled before the rush of Einar, the discomfited Bui sprang on board his own craft. Then, with a shock that threw the five men left on the *Maiden* on to their faces, Eric's *Green Dragon* thrust its bows between the Jomsborg galley and the *Maiden's* stern.

Einar lay where he had fallen, his head cut open against the edge of a rowing-bench, bleeding and senseless. Hakon raised himself and looked dazedly about him. Eric's men were flinging themselves over Bui's bulwarks with yells of fierce triumph.

On the instant the sun was blotted out, the sky grew black, a flash of lightning split the air from cloud to sea. With a sound like rushing wings the wind burst upon both fleets, blowing full in the vikings' teeth. On the heels of the wind came a stinging storm of hail, beating harmlessly on the neck-mail of the Thrandheim men, but pounding the vikings' faces, blinding them, with stones the size of small apples. Eric and his men were now over the rail, their swords and axes dealing havoc against the storm-beaten Jomsborgers.

AN UNHOLY joy lit up the face of Hakon.

"Thorgerd has heard my prayer!" he shouted. "She has accepted the sacrifice!"

With insane rage he unsheathed his sword and rushed into the fight. Many were the deeds of might and valor done that day; but no man raged against his enemies, none dealt such devastating strokes, as Hakon, the murderer of his child. He cut down men as sheep are slaughtered for the Spring sacrifice; he hacked and stabbed without mercy, without cease. The terrible Bui himself gave back before him, till he stood pressed against the stem-planks in the neck of his scarred ship.

Raising his sword to strike, Hakon misjudged his footing and stumbled. With a cry of relief Bui stooped, snatched up from the hold just at his feet two heavy wooden chests strapped together, and flung them over his shoulders as a peasant puts on a yoke. They were his treasure, the loot of many a sacked village, heavy with gold. Then, scrambling to the fore-deck, he cried—

"Overboard, all Bui's men!" And he leaped into the sea.

At the order, all his crew that survived the weapons of Eric leaped after him, their heads bobbing on the darkened waves. But Bui, dragged down by his plunder, sank to the world of drowned spirits.

Blinded by the hail, gashed with wounds they were almost powerless to resist, the crews of Sigvaldi were driven to the last resort of beaten men. They must cut through the ring of their assailants or perish miserably. At a shout from the war-chief they rushed upon and over their attackers, heedless of the death that met them; and by sheer weight of flesh they thrust the Norwegians back, step by step, one crew after another, upon their own ships.

Such of the vikings as still lived began to hack desperately at the cables which bound them together, till at last the galleys were free. As soon as ever a ship was cut loose the driving wind seized her and flung her toward the mouth of the bay; and soon all that was left of Sigvaldi's squadron, borne by the gale that caught the sails they raised in panic terror, swept from the wrath of men into the wrath of the storm.

Just as Sigvaldi's flagship was cut loose, Vagn Red-ax saw and cried out at him not to flee; but the war-chief heeded him not. Then Vagn cast a spear at him; it missed the Jomsborg chief and nailed the steersman to the tiller.

Now Eric fell upon Vagn, and the strife that arose was such that skalds sang of it for a generation afterward. Gudbrand the White and Thorkel Leira were like maddened wolves in their thirst for blood; Thorkel especially, remembering the oath Vagn had sworn to slay him and carry off

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his daughter, strove with all his giant strength to force a way through the vikings clustered in the waist of Vagn's flagship to the pirate chief himself.

But, cheered on by their wild leader, the Jomsborgers fought with no heed of the wounds they took; careless of the hail as of the overwhelming numbers that best them, they struggled on desperately for half an hour, their backs to the sides, till they were dragged down as wolves drag down a stag. Vagn himself was disarmed and captured by Eric the Young; he and thirty men with him, the sole survivors, were overpowered, bound and brought on shore.

EINAR came to himself upon the beach. The skies had cleared and the wind died down. All about him were the victorious men of Thrandheim, hacked and blood-stained, in a hollow square whose sides extended down and across the wide beach. Two newly-felled tree-trunks had been brought from a near-by wood to the sand; on one of these sat Hakon with six of his chiefs, and on the other, which was very great, were seated Vagn and his thirty fellow-prisoners. The captives were bound together with one rope, tied about the ankles of each, but their hands were free. Back of Hakon stood Thorkel Leira, grimly leaning on his ax.

Einar's head ached and he felt numb and weak. Styrkar, his right arm wrapped in a bloody bandage, sat beside him with a ship's bucket. Seeing his grandson stir, the old chief bathed his head and gave him to drink. Refreshed, Einar tried to sit up, and Styrkar supported him with his unwounded arm.

Then recollection rushed back on Einar and his soul turned sick. Little Erling's scream seemed still to ring in his ears; as he gazed at Hakon, sitting impassive on the tree-bole, he felt bitter hate swelling in his heart—hate for the man and his incredible, hellish deed. The murdered boy's fresh, girlish face, his high spirit and steady courage, all tore him with pangs sharper than those of his wounded head. And, remembering Bergliot's parting charge to him, remembering her love for her little brother, he gnawed his lips in hopeless, anguished fury and looked at Hakon with eyes that held death in them.

And this was his lord, the brave, the generous earl, who had freed the land, who bound the hearts of his warriors to him with a chain of proud affection! This was the ruler of Norway! He was a fiend, he was worse than Loki, who slew his brother Balder, the White God.

But Hakon's voice broke the silence.

"Slay them, Thorkel," the earl commanded.

Thorkel did not stir.

"I am no executioner, Hakon Jarl," he answered, and something like hate sounded in his voice also. "Let me kill Vagn Red-ax, for he swore to slay me and take my daughter Ingeborg without the consent of her kindred; but bid me not stain my hands with the blood of other helpless men."

And he glanced first at Hakon, then at Vagn, with such fury that it was hard to tell which one he hated most—his enemy or his earl.

"Slay them, or I will set Vagn free," Hakon threatened.

So Thorkel, his face twisted with disgust, strode over to that other tree on which sat, bound together in order, first three viking warriors, then Vagn, then the seven and twenty others captured in the fight. Raising his ax, Thorkel clove the first to the breast-bone, then turned again to Hakon.

"This makes my stomach sick," he said. "Bid one of the men hold them as I strike, or I will strike amiss."

So one of the warriors was ordered to hold the second, whose hair was long and beautiful.

"Make not my hair bloody!" pleaded the viking, and pushed his fine locks up over his head. The soldier took the hair in his hand as the captive thrust forth his neck; and Thorkel raised the ax. But, just as it fell, the viking pulled back sharply, dragging the soldier forward with him; the blade sheared through the soldier's arms at the wrists and buried itself in the earth.

Then up sprang Eric the Young from Hakon's side, crying:

"Well done, sea-thief! For that I will spare thy life!"

"Who gave thee authority to spare?" rasped Hakon; but Eric answered through set teeth:

"Thou didst deprive me of a brother today, whom I loved more than thou, though thou didst beget him. Therefore thou owest me more than one life, and I will spare whom I will."

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So they unbound the viking, and he braided up his hair.

Then said Thorkel Leira:

"I have slain enough today. One more only will I kill, and that is Vagn." And he rushed forward, brandishing the ax in both hands.

But the viking who was bound before Vagn threw himself forward, so that Thorkel stumbled over his body and fell prone, the ax starting from his hand. With a whoop of joy Vagn sprang up, heedless of the rope about his ankles, caught up the ax and smote Thorkel's head from his shoulders.

Eric turned on his father.

"See how thy bloodthirstiness has slain a better man than thou!" he said. "All these men shall go free; and as for Vagn, he fought me today as a brave man should fight. Therefore I order that he be ransomed, and that Thorkel's daughter Ingeborg be given him in marriage. Now that her father is dead, she has no other kin, so that in marrying her Vagn will fulfill his vow."

"I thank thee, Eric," Vagn answered. "My life for thine, if ever thou hast need of it."

But Einar leaned back in his grandfather's arms, hate burning in his eyes and misery in his heart.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FRUITS OF VICTORY

AS SOON as the bows of the long-ships pointed toward home once more, Hakon's mood seemed to pass; he became his old gracious self again. His features showed never a trace of grief or remorse at his son's death, showed not even consciousness that he had lost a child. This cold lack of feeling well nigh drove Einar to frenzy. When the earl offered, in apparent kindness, to excuse him from his turn at the oar because of his slight injury, the archer abruptly declined the offer and walked stiffly to the rowing-bench.

The sea was wrapped in an utter calm; the water was almost waveless, unruffled by the slightest breeze. Those of the crews who had suffered no wounds were obliged to fall to the oars, and the fleet, urged by their trained arms, swept steadily north and east, white blades whipping the blue water in time with the songs of the chanteymen.

The hard, monotonous toil at the oar brought Einar to himself, calmed the bitterness of his heart and gave him abundant opportunity to think. When he left his bench at the end of the first day, his duty was plain to him. Though he could never again serve Hakon gratefully or gladly, though his old love and admiration were driven out by mistrust and hatred, he was nevertheless the earl's man, bound to him by oaths of loyalty, held to his service by duty and honor.

When all was said and done, Hakon had saved Norway again, as he had done twice in the past, from destruction and the yoke of foreign tyrants. The old royal line being extinct, there was no other man to whom the land could be safely entrusted, no other whom his turbulent countrymen would serve. If one prince of the blood of Harald Fairhair were yet living, the people might turn to him, and Hakon might be overthrown. But there was none; Hakon alone stood between the peasants and anarchy, or the tyranny of the Danes.

Moreover, Einar trusted the oath Hakon had sworn at the Allthing. Now, the peasants won over by the earl's promise of good behavior and fired with fresh enthusiasm for his leadership by the victory over Jomsborg, Hakon sat more firmly on his throne than ever before; and it was best that it should be so. Therefore Einar knew that, loathe the earl as he might for the bloody murder of Erling, he was nonetheless bound to follow him still. Besides, there was Bergliot.

The afternoon of the third day saw the fleet round the eastern cliffs of Hitrar Island and head in toward the mouth of Thrandheim Fiord. As soon as the flagship, flying the earl's banner, caught the watching eye of the coast-guard, horsemen spurred inland with the news. While the galleys floated on the waters of the long fiord, the country-folk came running to both beaches, thicker and faster, till the fleet passed between shores lined with cheering crowds. Loud in return rang the shouts of the victorious warriors, while Hakon stood on the *Maiden's* fore-deck, a gallant figure of triumph.

Disembarking at the mouth of the Nid, the crews were borne off on the shoulders of the rejoicing people. Again and again

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the earl answered their applause, but still they thronged about him, cheering, laughing, weeping with joy. At last Kark and a score of his fellow-thralls forced a way through with horses; the earl and his chiefs mounted and rode away to Ladir.

Bergliot stood waiting at the hall-door, her women about her. But as the riders approached she turned away quickly, hiding her face. Dismounting, the victors entered. A maid-servant plucked at Einar's sleeve.

"My lady awaits you in the bower," she said.

As he drew aside the curtain, Bergliot came to meet him.

"You return—alone?" she asked.

Her eyes were dry, but she trembled, as if cold.

"He is dead," Einar faltered.

"And you live?" her voice accused him.

"I live, for his young hand saved me. He perished——"

"How?" she asked quickly, her eyes cold and hard.

"Like a man, facing the foe."

Bergliot turned from him, burying her face in her hands. She stood long so; then, barely controlling the grief that choked her voice, she cried:

"He saved you, and you let him die! This is how you keep your oath! And I trusted you! I believed you a man! I was sure you would give your body to be hacked in pieces rather than let harm come to him! Ah, you traitor!"

Now Einar's eyes were wet with tears and a huge lump rose in his throat; but his grief was for her, not for himself. He could say no word in his own defense. Let what might happen to him, even though his love lay in ashes at his feet, he could not say to Bergliot that her brother had been slaughtered by her father's hand. Out of the strength of his heart he had determined to make the sacrifice, to leave her one sweet illusion, the belief in her father's goodness. So, with bowed head, he accepted her scorn and turned away. As he left the room, Bergliot broke into unrestrained weeping.

Late that evening Einar sat in his quarters, a spacious room boarded off from the armory, and tasted the bitterness of sorrow. From the bower he had gone directly to his duties, enumerating the losses of his company, seeing to the disposal and care of the wounded, checking up the supplies of arrows and the count of bows and armor. Then, without eating, he went to his own place, his torn heart craving solitude. But the brightness of the Summer night seemed to spy upon him with myriad eyes, to mock his grief. He did not wish for sleep, rather for death; for he could see happiness and peace nowhere.

Driven out at last by his restlessness, he went to the door and stared out beyond the garth gate away toward the water. The quiet fiord, serene in a calm that seemed eternal, called to his despair with the alluring voice of its lapping waters, as if offering him rest beneath its surface. Then a hand lightly touched his shoulder; he started as if stung. Beside him stood a woman, the hood of her cloak drawn over her eyes. Yet, muffled as she was, he knew her.

"Come," she commanded; and he followed her down the path to the gate.

It was so light that the men on guard recognized him at once and drew aside, grinning. With swift, steady steps Bergliot led him to the beach, then turned and threw back her hood. Her face was pale and wet with tears. In her eyes horror lurked; yet sorrow and tenderness shone in them too; and Einar, noting the firm strength of her features, was moved no less by the greatness of her soul than by her sorrow.

"Why did you not tell me the truth?" she asked. "Why did you let me wrong you so?" Then, without waiting for an answer, "Yet it was brave of you; I think no man ever did a braver thing."

Not knowing what to say, Einar kept silence and the girl resumed:

"I could not endure the thought that you had failed me, so I asked Thorleif what had happened. He did not wish to answer, but at last he told me. He told me how you fought to save my brother, how you slew three men that would have killed him, and how Erling——"

Her grief suddenly overwhelmed her and she fell to sobbing. Unable to endure more, Einar threw himself on his knees before her and took both her hands in his. For a while she wept; then she freed her hands gently and laid them on his head.

"You have suffered much for my sake," she said softly. "May the gods—" She broke off with a strangled cry. "Ah, can they be gods, and not rather fiends, who

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demand such sacrifice? Can they be worthy of worship who sell victory for the blood of an innocent child?"

Their hearts steeped in the ancient superstition, neither Bergliot nor Einar doubted that Thorgerd and the other gods had required little Erling's death as the price of victory. Had not the hail-storm risen, and the tide of battle turned, as soon as the dagger took his life? Yet to neither of them did Hakon's guilt, or the enormity of the wrong, seem a whit the less.

"Gods or demons," swore Einar hotly, "from this day I worship them no more! Better to defy them and perish!"

"So I think," Bergliot answered.

They faced each other, each gazing into the other's eyes. Their bold denial of their gods seemed to set them apart from the world, alone together in all that land, under a blood-stained, angry heaven. It drew them together in their common isolation, as they had never been drawn in the brightness of the days that were gone.

Einar's overflowing heart could hold no more. He threw both arms about Bergliot and kissed her on the lips. Nor did she deny him; they clung together in their love, alone in the world of the old gods.

"Now let all Asgard rain its fires upon me!" he cried. "I fear them not, for I have found my love!"

"And I," she answered, "have found joy in sorrow and happiness in bitter tears."

HAKON too sat long alone that night, the remorse he had concealed gnawing his soul. He had loved Erling, as his selfish nature knew love; but love with him always yielded to his baser desires. Two things he yearned for more than all else in the world: power and the beauty of women. Victory over the vikings had been essential to him. Had he lost, Norway, which his sins and the anger of the peasants had almost snatched from his hands, would have repudiated him. He would have lost prestige, the throne, perhaps life itself. This he could not have borne; rather would he have sacrificed a thousand sons.

The third force in his soul was superstition. For him the old gods lived indeed, jealous and terrible. They had given him the ruthless strength and cunning with which he had raised himself to supreme power; they had given him the satisfaction of his desires; and in the recent battle, thirsting for sacrifice, they had withheld victory until he yielded up to them the blood of his young child. He was as sure of these things as of his own existence.

But victory, the favor of the gods, could not lighten a father's heart, could not bring back the sound of a son's laughter in the courts, the rush of boyish feet upon the stairs, the trustful, worshiping love in the eyes of his little child. Wherefore Hakon plucked at his garments, tore his beard and gave his soul over to the hell that seared it. And in the fierceness of his remorse, his heart crying out for surcease of pain, for forgetfulness, he sought to drown his anguish in the satisfaction of another desire that, in its unfulfillment, had long tormented him. He sent for Kark.

For more than an hour the earl and his slave whispered together in the dark chamber. An evil light glowed in Kark's eyes; a hideous grin overspread his features as the earl spoke in his ear. When all was said, Kark nodded and withdrew. The earl threw himself, exhausted with suffering, on his couch; but he slept not.

The next afternoon Einar was ordered to ride away to Oglo ten miles east of Ladir, with a message to Asbiorn concerning certain matters of unpaid taxes.

CHAPTER IX

THE BROKEN OATH

THE evening sun shone warm and still bright on the yellow-green meadow before Medalhus. Orm Lyrgia and his young wife sat at meat in front of their house, a table and bench having been moved out amid the rich June grass. With pretty tenderness Gudrun cut morsels from her husband's food and filled his ale-cup; for Orm's left arm was bound tightly to his side and a poultice of bear's grease was tied about his shoulder, where a viking ax had bitten through his mail at Hiorunga Bay.

Ever and again, when the servants disappeared within the house, Orm's uninjured right arm stole about Gudrun's waist. A thrush sang from the reeds down by the river; the drone of homing bees sounded sleepily in the sunshine.

"Nay, what art thou doing?" Orm laughed suddenly. "Thou hast spilt ale over my hand!"

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Gudrun's eyes were not on the pitcher from which she had been pouring, but gazing between the houses which dotted the fields to the eastward.

"I hear voices, my husband. Listen!"

"Guests, belike; it is too early for the peasants to come home from work. See, it is Kark, the earl's thrall! He must be bringing some message from Hakon."

It was Kark indeed, a dozen armed men at his back, coming toward the house from a swale in the low-lying field between Orm's house and the clustering peasant-huts. A fringe of willows had hidden them up to this moment.

"A strange message that needs so many bearers, and they with weapons," Gudrun remarked uneasily.

"Be it what it may, we shall soon know," her husband answered.

And soon they knew indeed; for Kark, walking steadily toward them between the deserted peasants' houses, was wearing an expression of malice and insolence. As he came near, he cried rudely:

"Ho, Orm Lyrgia! Hakon Jarl hath need of thy wife, wherefore it behooves thee to yield her up to me at once, that I may bring her to him. It is too much honor to such a dog that the earl should send me to bid thee."

Gudrun's face flamed scarlet and she fled into the house. But Orm, hiding his anger, called her back. He was wounded; there were but three men-servants about the house, and all were unarmed. The odds were too great at best; and if the jingle of a mail birnie warned the slaves that Orm's men were arming themselves, all would be over before a man might count twenty. So, dissembling as best he could, Orm played for time.

"Wherefore call me dog, when I am ready to obey the earl's bidding? Let the girl but finish her meal first; and do ye also sit down and eat. Ye are doubtless hungry and dry with your journey."

Kark's face lighted. He was hungry, and thirst always plagued him. So he nodded shortly and Orm cried:

"Ho, Ubbi, Grim, Tosti! Fetch out tables, benches, meat and ale! Hakon's men dine with us!"

The three servants quickly set out trestles, boards and benches and placed food upon them. Gudrun sat silent and ashamed beside her husband, biting her lip with anger at his ready acquiescence in so horrible a thing. But the fingers of his right hand found hers under the table and pressed them hard. Suddenly he leaped from his feet, dashing a jug of ale from Grim's hand.

"Not that, fool!" he shouted. "That is fit drink for thee, but it befits not our honor to give such sour stuff to Hakon's men! Here, I will show thee!" And he dragged the abashed servant into the house.

Once within the kitchen, he hissed in Grim's ear:

"Kark and his dogs have come for thy mistress. Go thou swiftly to Skerdingstad, to Saltness, to Vigg, and rouse the folk! Bring back Ulf, Aslak and Haldor with thee, and as many more as thou canst find! Lose no time!"

Without so much as a backward glance the servant ran through the open back door, keeping the house between him and the thralls of Hakon till he could dodge between the peasant-huts in the rear. In a little while he was out of sight. Taking down a small keg from the shelf, Orm went out to his unbidden guests.

"He would have given you slops to drink, but I broke his head and fetched you the best ale that has been brewed these ten years," he boasted.

The slaves sat down eagerly, and so soon as Ubbi and Tosti had broached the keg and brought food they fell upon the good cheer like swine at the trough. And well they might, for nothing had passed their lips since they had left Ladir. Orm ate with them, his face wreathed in hospitable smiles; but Gudrun, despite her husband's covert signals, could scarcely force her food between her lips. The good meat and drink vanished rapidly before their onslaughts; and ever Orm ordered his servants to bring more, till the thralls were half-totty with the strong liquor and torpid with eating. Kark, an animal in all things, outdid the greediest of his fellows, taking off a hornful at a single gulp.

Plied with such cheer as they had not tasted in all their servile lives, they did not notice how the time passed. It was the season of long days, even for that northern latitude, and the sun still shone too brightly to warn them of the flying hours. Time enough for their errand when they had done with their victim's princely hospitality. Kark drank to him, leering, vowing that

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here was a man who knew how to appreciate the earl's favors, unlike that fool Bryniolf, who resented his good fortune and found death for his pains.

The toast was cheered. A bony Frankish thrall, desiring to do it honor, seized the almost emptied ale-keg and placed his lips to the bung, his head flung far back. Even as he drank, a strange humming sounded in his ears, the keg fell crashing to the table, and he slumped down afterward, a javelin sticking out between his shoulder-blades. Then the shouting of many men burst forth around them; the startled slaves sprang to their feet, tugging at their weapons; but, half-dizzy with drink, they were overwhelmed and cut down by the first rush of the enfuriated peasants.

Kark alone was saved by his seasoned head. He tried to place the table between himself and his assailants, but they were all about him. With a bellow of fear he raised one of the massive benches in his knotty arms and hove it full at the circle of his foes. Its weight carried down four men, and through the breach Kark charged, sword in hand. One of the prostrate men was thrust through as he reached out an arm to trip the fugitive. The peasants poured in pursuit, but Kark was fleet as a stag and the chase was vain.

GUDRUN, faint with the stress of her emotion and the suddenness of her salvation, collapsed in her husband's arms. His own pallor evincing the strain he had undergone, Orm turned to Ulf Wry-lip.

"How comes it that you came so soon and in such numbers?" he asked.

There were no fewer than two hundred of the peasants.

"Your man came to Haldor of Skerdingstad first," Ulf explained. "Haldor was building a new house, and men had come from far and near to help him and to join in the raising-feast. They stopped at my house on the way hither. But did you see whither that swine fled?"

Then Orm realized for the first time that Kark had run not toward Ladir, whence he came, but northeast toward Vigg.

"But why?" he asked. "Your estates lie that way. He must be mad with fear, or too drunk to know whither he went."

Ulf snorted.

"Never was drink or fear strong enough to drown his cunning, toper and coward that he is. The truth is that Hakon is not at Ladir, but at Vigg. Even as I was arming my laborers to hasten to you, the *Maiden* rowed into the bay. So I knew then that the earl was after two rabbits with one snare. Kark must have had orders to take your wife to the ship at Vigg, and in the meantime Hakon thought to catch and kill me for my part in the Jomsborg plot. He had many men with him, for the *Maiden* shone with the flash of their mail."

"But why?" mused Orm. "It would have been easier to have her brought to him at Ladir and send his housecarls overland for you."

"I can tell you," a brazen voice bellowed in his ear.

Old Bergthor, his white hair touzled and his face scarlet with his vain chase after Kark, stood beside Orm.

"It was because there are two folk at Ladir from whom Hakon wished to hide his crime till the deed was done: his daughter and young Einar, who stood sponsor with Styrkar for his oath at the Allthing. Styrkar told me the part the boy played in that matter, and the earl fears interference from him."

"May the gods shower blessings upon him!" Orm cried fervently. "Never had a man a better foster-brother than I have in Einar!"

Gudrun came to herself now and, trembling, sat down on the threshold. Bergthor, rage twisting his features, grasped Orm by the shoulder.

"Will you leave this deed unavenged?" he demanded.

Orm pointed to the corpses of the slaves.

"It is tolerably well avenged," he said simply.

"Is my daughter's husband no better than Hakon thought him, that he is content with the blood of slaves?" Bergthor roared passionately. "Ho, men of Thrandheim! What shall be done with an earl who breaks his sacred oath and steals the wives of men who bleed for him?"

Ulf Wry-lip clashed his sword against the brazen boss of his shield.

"He must die!" he shouted.

"Aye, he must die!" chorused the peasants; and Orm, his judgment swept away by their enthusiasm and the mounting sense of his own wrongs, cried with them—

"He shall die!"

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Then Haldor of Skerdingstad came forward and raised his hand for silence.

"It is settled that Hakon dies," he said thoughtfully, "but a plan is needed, lest things go amiss. Will ye harken to me?"

All gave instant attention, for Haldor was known for a shrewd man, whose cold hate for the earl would not interfere with his cunning.

"If we march on Vigg, we shall meet the earl with his whole array of cutthroats, who can not be less than we and are much better armed, besides having a ship to retreat to. Moreover, they will see us coming and form a shield-wall, against which we will dash ourselves to pieces. Better to march on Ladir, capture the court and await Hakon there, behind the walls of his own garth. Yet that too will be hard, for, if we come by the road, the guards will see us and shut the gate.

"Therefore there is but one way: first, we must gather more men; then, we must ride east across the Nid and so north to the rear of the court-garth. That side, having no gate, is unguarded. Surrounding the garth save by the gate, we will let four men, with no armor to betray them, creep round the palisade to the gate; then those in the rear will call, as if seeking strayed cattle. When the guards look away, the four in ambush will rush the gate and stab them. If it is done carefully, we can be inside and surround the warriors' quarters before any suspect evil. Once that is done, we will await Hakon's return inside the garth, and he will enter without suspicion and in disarray."

"Why not storm the place without more ado?" Bergthor interrupted impatiently.

"Because there must be still more than a hundred trained soldiers lodged in the armory, allowing for two hundred that Hakon has with him on the *Maiden*," Haldor answered. "Besides, Einar Thumb-shaker will certainly be there, and you would not harm him."

"Not I," Bergthor admitted; but Ulf's face darkened, for he had forgiven neither Styrkar nor Einar for his discomfiture at the Allthing.

He said nothing, however.

"Let it be as Haldor has said," Orm decided. "Go now, fetch more men and horses. Look, Haldor, where shall we leave the horses when we come near Ladir? The tramp of their hoofs would betray us."

"There is a birch grove a mile east of the court," Haldor answered.

"So be it. Let each man take care, when we pass the gate, that Einar is not hurt."

The peasants agreed readily, for Styrkar and his grandson were well loved; moreover, the whole countryside was pleased at the manly way in which Einar had borne himself at Hiorunga Bay.

"We will meet here," Orm continued, "since it is on the direct way for most of us. Gudrun, you will go with Ubbi and the other servants to Skerdingstad, where you can find safety with Haldor's wife. If you are molested, flee to the temple of Freyja, for that is near by, and no one will dare take you from the altar. But I think Hakon will go back to Ladir when he hears from Kark what has befallen his dogs."

HIS ERRAND done, Einar rode back from Oglo in the early morning. His way led him through a thick birch grove not far from the court, and as he rode, he sang, for his heart was light with his joy in Bergliot's love. Suddenly he felt something strike his breast; the earth seemed to rise up and smite him, and he found himself sitting, half-dazed, on the ground. His horse, relieved of his weight, ambled on contentedly.

As he made to rise, a swarm of men poured out from the dark shadow of the wood and rough hands seized him. A stalwart peasant sprang out down the wood-road and stopped his horse.

"Who halts the earl's man?" Einar called out angrily; but a large hand stopped his mouth and Bergthor's voice whispered in his ear:

"Silence, boy, as you value life! Struggle not, and no harm will befall you."

Einar recognized the old man at once; saw, too, that Bergthor held one end of a long rope which, stretched across the path, had swept him from the saddle. One after another, well-known faces appeared before his eyes.

"Orm, Haldor, Ulf! What do you here? What does this mean?" he asked in bewilderment.

In few, hot words Bergthor told him what had happened. Astonishment, shame and rage showed in the archer's face, revealing to the peasants that he was with them in heart at least. Well might he be angry: for, apart

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from his natural resentment at Hakon's base treatment of his friend Orm, he realized that he, Einar, whose honor was virtually pledged to restrain the earl from breaking the promise given at the Allthing, had been sent away on a fool's errand to make it possible for Hakon to violate his oath. In his attempt to commit a fouler wrong than any he had yet been guilty of, Hakon had used Einar's confidence to clear the way.

"And now, will you join us?" Orm asked in friendly earnestness. "You are my foster-brother, and the bond which binds us is closer than that of kinship or the obligation of service."

"It is closer than all else on earth," Einar confessed; "but look you, Orm; if you slay Hakon, whom will you find to lead the people or to guard Norway against the greedy Danes? Will you choose a war-chief from Hakon's house-carls, or offer the royal crown to Ulf here? For there is no one left of royal blood, and no one but Hakon who can shield the land. Base as he is, he is all that stands between the people and ruin."

Ulf's sword flashed in his hand.

"This cub is bought, body and soul, with Hakon's gold," he snarled. "Better make an end of him, and go about our work while there is yet time."

But Orm thrust his own body between his friend and Ulf's point.

"Touch him, and I will feed thee to the wolves," he threatened.

Then Bergthor spoke, hot with anger.

"I have known thee since thou couldst first toddle, Einar," he urged, "and ever thou hast had a brave honest heart in thee. Thy words are those of man loyal to his lord. But remember that thy lord has broken his sworn oath and will do so again and again, whenever his lusts incline him. Remember that we, too, have our honor to maintain; and the insult which has been offered us calls for blood. Art thou for us or against us?"

Einar searched for words to reach the hearts of these men, to convince them how evil would be the consequences to all Norway if they should destroy the earl. At last he said:

"It is true that I am his man, though I serve him now not for his own sake, but for Norway's." Bergliot was in his thoughts, but he could not speak of her to others, least of all to Hakon's enemies. "I am also the friend of the people, much more than I am his. But what advantage would it be to the people, if, he being slain, the wolves of Denmark swept down upon them, bringing not one death nor one shame, but many thousands? No; I will do what I can to bring Hakon to his senses; but I will not draw sword against him. Furthermore, if ye go on with your plan, I will cry a warning; perhaps it may be heard from here before ye slay me."

Then Bergthor, chafing with impatient fury, tossed high the massive ax which, twenty years before, he had borne at Hakon's side at the Dane-work.

"We have gabbled enough," he said fiercely. "Let this stubborn lad do what he will, I go on to Ladir, and I will not come back while Hakon lives."

Orm caught his father-in-law's arm.

"I have it!" he cried eagerly. "There is a way to bind Hakon to his oath so firmly that death himself could not force him to break it, a way to spare his life and yet keep him harmless. Einar is his officer and is clothed with authority. Let him go to the court, order the men-at-arms away on some pretext and let us in. We will harm no one, but we will bear off Bergliot to a safe place and hold her a hostage for her father's good behavior. Thus we will vindicate our honor and still keep Hakon to maintain the land against the Danes."

The assembled peasants gasped with admiration of this daring scheme. The justice of it appealed to them more than the lust for Hakon's blood; and indeed they knew that Einar was right in fearing Denmark. As for Einar, his face grew hot, his breath came in quick heaves. But before he could speak, Ulf interfered again.

"This is well enough for you," he grumbled, "for your women have not already endured shame; but for me it is less than nothing. Take Bergliot if you will, but give her to me, and I will take vengeance for us all."

Einar's fist shot out and caught Ulf full on the mouth. The man fell as if struck by lightning, and Einar, snatching the sword from him, broke it across his knee. Then he turned to the peasants, speaking with forced calm:

"Orm's plan is good, and I will carry it out. But there is no need to send away the guards; I will go alone and bring her to you here. She will come with me, for she trusts me. But first I must have your oath

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that she will be unharmed, and will receive the treatment due a woman of her rank."

Orm Lyrgia grasped his hand and shook it warmly.

"You have my oath, on our foster-brotherhood," he vowed, "that she shall be held safe and in honor."

"And by the same oath," answered Einar, "I will bring her to you. Do you agree, Bergthor?"

The veteran frowned, but at last shook hands upon it.

"I agree, if I may have the keeping of her. It is fitting that he whose daughter the earl would have wronged should guard the earl's daughter."

"It is not that I do not trust you," Einar retorted, "but only one man here is bound to me by the oath of foster-brotherhood. I will give her up to no man but Orm Lyrgia."

"And no man but I will receive her, so rest content," Orm assured him.

A LONG cloak gathered about her night-robe, Bergliot drew her maid from the bower-door.

"I will speak with him myself," she said and, stepping into the corridor, confronted Einar.

Whispering, he told her what had happened and how he had striven with the peasants for her father's life. Bergliot listened with horror, her face crimson in the gray light; but there was no fear in her eyes. When he had finished, she answered simply:

"This is the second time you have saved our land from destruction, Einar. I will go with you, not alone because it is the only way, but because I trust you."

"If I had not been sure that no evil would come to you, I had not consented," he told her. "But you are as safe with Orm as with me."

So, retiring only to clothe herself, Bergliot left her father's court to go among strangers who had no kindly feeling for her, and who hated her father. And she went unhesitating, because of her love for Einar and the peril of her country. When they reached the gate, the guardsmen, astonished, halted them; but Einar said—

"The earl is at Vigg and has sent for the Lady Bergliot."

Now the men knew Hakon was at Vigg, but they knew not that Einar was aware of it. His possession of the knowledge was to them proof that he spoke the truth; so they raised their spears and let him pass out with their lady.

CHAPTER X

THE DEAD ARISEN

AS SOON as the *Maiden's* sail showed off the mouth of the Nid, Einar rode to the beach; and there he met Hakon as he landed. The earl's face was haggard with sleeplessness and the emotion that consumed him; his eyes were red and smoldering. Dismounting before him, Einar ignored his obvious desire to be left to himself and whispered in his ear. Fixing his fierce eyes on the young man, Hakon nodded abruptly and signed to his men to remain where they were. The two walked up the beach together in silence till they were out of earshot.

Einar wasted no time in vain denunciation. He came straight to the point: recounted, as if the earl knew nothing of it, the visit of Kark to Orm Lyrgia's, his insulting demand and the ruse which had brought the armed peasants up in time. Then, telling of his own encounter with the avenging party in the wood near Ladir, Einar reported the agreement he had made with them, and their promise to return without further action on condition that Bergliot be surrendered to them. He admitted freely his own part in the affair: how he himself had given Bergliot into Orm's charge.

Before he could finish, Hakon caught him by the throat and drew his dagger. But Einar, looking him in the eyes, did not move in his grasp.

"It was my fortune once to save thy life," he said evenly. "Now I have saved thy kingdom twice, and my reward is to be a knife-thrust."

Slowly Hakon released his hold and returned his dagger to its sheath.

"But my daughter!" he protested. "Surely you could have kept her from them, raised the guard and held the rebels off till I came!"

"She is safe with Orm," Einar answered boldly. "No harm can touch her so long as you keep faith. The peasants will not hurt her while she is with them; nor will you dare break your word to them now, I think.

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They ask no more than to be safe from you. Norway is more firmly than ever in your hands."

Hakon turned toward the town.

"You are right, as always," he said. "But let me not look upon your face till I have somewhat forgotten this."

FOR SOME weeks Einar was left to himself. The earl did not send for him; nor did his sense of duty permit him to visit Bergliot at Medalhus. He was still Hakon's man; to see her, he would be obliged to go among the peasants, and the strength of his position lay in the earl's knowledge that he was not concerned in their uprising.

Hakon stirred abroad but little; he was both sullen at his failure to lay hands on Gudrun and anxious for his daughter. He did not even send for Kark, for the slave was in temporary disgrace for bungling his mission. In very truth the earl was an unhappy man. Gudrun's beauty haunted him; he longed for her as he had never longed for anything before; but fear for Bergliot's safety kept his hands tied. Knowing that the angry peasants were still watchful, and that every housecarl in his service was well known, he did not even dare set spies upon Orm's household. He was helpless to achieve his will in the land that called him master.

Whenever he thought of Gudrun, Einar's accusing face came into his mind. The boy had become his conscience, accusing him of his crimes, standing between him and the satisfaction of his evil wishes. At times he half resolved to have the archer murdered, but his prudence withheld him. After all, it was Einar who kept the peasants from his throat. Einar and his grandfather had won the people to him at the Allthing and contributed greatly to his victory over the vikings.

Even now, by surrendering Bergliot to Orm, Einar had preserved his throne and his life. Moreover, selfish and vindictive as he was, Hakon felt considerable affection for Einar, an affection which his anger and fear could not blot out. It was maddening to have the boy in his way, between him and Gudrun; but it was a very solid comfort to have Einar's firm loyalty between him and the swords of the peasants, assuring him of safety and at least nominal obedience.

As the days passed, an idea gradually formed in Hakon's mind. The details eluded him bafflingly, but the idea itself, he felt sure, was sound. He must get rid of Einar for a time, and in such as way as to give the boy a chance to distinguish himself. Since the peasants loved and trusted Einar, any commission that brought him honor and increased fame would please them, avert their suspicion, and bind them more firmly to the earl. But Einar must be sent away for a sufficiently long time.

In his absence, Hakon would set about winning back the people's trust. He knew he could do it. Often in the past he had done it, when they had been almost as bitter against him as now. He knew the power of his personal charm, the magnitude of his reputation for generosity, and the effect of a little carefully distributed graciousness. If he could once get Einar away, he would devote all his powers to making the people forget his sins against them, so that they would remember only his kindness and the brilliance of his services to Norway.

The victory over Jomsborg counted heavily in his favor in the southern districts, where the peasants had not suffered from his crimes. And, while they were still dazzled by this return to his former magnanimous self, he would cunningly strengthen his following with men from the south, gathered together a little at a time, till his forces should be too strong for any rebellion. Then he might still have time, before Einar returned, to fall upon the peasants while they slept in false security. He would go himself this time.

Kark was a bungler, but he could trust his own powers. He would come with a host, in the dead of night—in the Winter, of course, when the nights were dark—snatch away both Gudrun and Bergliot before any man guessed what had befallen, and cut to pieces any who dared rise against him. True, he was bound to good behavior by the most sacred of oaths; but even in his superstitious heart the fear of Thorgerd had been slowly sapped by his frenzy; fear gradually died away as his impatient love for Gudrun increased.

He reveled in the thought of the cunning with which he would lull the people to sleep, reveled in the recollection of Gudrun's beauty and the prospect of having her helpless in his hands. But the flaw in his scheme was this: It was not so easy to get rid of Einar without rousing suspicion. He racked

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his brains for a plan, but none came.

It was late July now. There came a day still and sultry, with a feel of thunder in the air. Hakon sat in his chamber, scheming, scheming. He started at the sound of a knock on the door.

"Thorir Clack would see the earl," announced a servant, and Hakon leaped up with a cry of joy.

Thorir Clack, so named from his love of his own voice, was a famous merchant and traveler, whose keels plowed every sea from Iceland to Italy. He was a jolly, talkative man, who told fascinating stories with a wondrous vividness, and men listened to him eagerly. Above all, he was the earl's friend and in earlier days had shared many of Hakon's escapades. For two years he had been away voyaging. Many would be the tales he would bring. The earl's tortured mind welcomed the pleasant distraction; he would find great comfort in a friend with whom he could talk.

Thorir came in, a tall, powerful man of middle age, with iron-gray hair and the suggestion of a paunch. His broad, weather-beaten face smiled broadly; his fleshy nose and beaming eyes radiated a good-fellowship which laughed back from every humorous wrinkle in his big cheeks. A man to be liked and trusted, one would have said. A man with frank eyes and honest heart. But men with honest hearts were rare in the earl's service, and they rarely won his confidence or friendship.

When the door was closed on them and the first glad greetings were said, Hakon threw himself back on his couch with the first carefree smile that had relaxed his lips for many days. Thorir began to talk at once. He began with reminiscences of Italy, passed to an account of viking raids on the coast of Spain, recounted spicy bits of gossip gathered at the rich, corrupt court of Constantinople, spoke largely of jewels, silks, gold, great cities and beautiful women of the South.

FOR HOURS Hakon listened, charmed completely out of the black mood that had beset him, forgetful of his plots and schemes. From time to time he asked quick, eager questions; and the answers made his eyes sparkle, or called forth a deep, full-throated laugh.

"But now I must tell you of Oli of Ireland, and how he got his dog," Thorir chuckled "First, though, let me have some ale, for I am dry with talking."

A servant was summoned and returned with horns and a brimming flagon. Thorir seized his horn from the servant's hand and, with license born of his familiarity with the earl, drank without waiting for Hakon. One long, breathless pull emptied the cup. He handed it back to be refilled and began:

"Oli, you must know, is a rare fellow. He has been a bit of a viking in his time and has harried every coast from Wendland to Ireland, but for some reason he would never plunder on Norwegian soil. No fear of you withheld him, for the man knows no fear. I have seen him with these two eyes, fighting three men at once in a marked ring, they full-armored and he in his shirt; and he slew them all without taking a scratch.

Once he heard that King Connor of Meath set great store by his long red beard. What does this Oli do but go alone to Connor's court, stand alone before the king and demand that beard to trim his mantle.

"The Irishman, purple with anger, bade his warriors cut the insolent stranger to pieces; but before they could stir, Oli sweeps out his sword, seizes the king by the beard and threatens to kill him if a single guardsman stirs a foot. While they stand fuming, Oli cuts the beard close to the chin, without spilling a drop of blood. Then, picking Connor up like a child, he backs out the door. As fast as a man turns steel against him, Oli thrusts Connor between himself and the blade, and the guardsman dares not strike.

"All this while Connor, his chin like a new-mown field, is kicking and roaring, and Oli laughing at him. Once at the door, Oli flings the king full at the throng of housecarls waiting with drawn swords, leaps to his horse's back and spurs off, with half Meath bellowing after. Oh, he fears you not, Hakon, nor any other man. They say he is a Norwegian himself, but of that I know not."

Thorir laughed heartily at his own tale, and Hakon with him. Taking a long drink, the merchant held out his horn again; but at a sign from the earl the servant went out, leaving the ale behind. Hakon himself filled his guest's cup and Thorir resumed:

"Well, the dog. Oli is a great man in Ireland, having married the daughter of Olaf Kvaran, king in Dublin. He is a

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Christian, wherefore he kills no prisoners of war except those who worship our gods. One day he made a great raid against the South Irish and, as usual, took much cattle and many prisoners. One of the captives was an old carl, who owned a fine dog; it had been hard to capture him because the dog defended him stoutly, and Oli would not let the beast be harmed. The man says to Oli:

" 'You do ill to rob Christians. Give me back my cattle.' Wishing to humor him, Oli answers: 'Here are many hundreds of cattle. Can you pick out your own?' 'No, but my dog can.' So Oli turns the dog loose, and the carl cries: 'So, Vigi! Bring them in!' And in ten minutes the dog has thirty cattle cut out from the herd. 'Are these yours?' asks Oli. 'Aye.' 'Then I will give them all back to you, and your freedom and ten gold-pieces beside, if you will give me the dog.'

"The peasant frowns. 'I would gladly do that,' he says at length, 'but I have saved this dog for a present to Oli of Russia, who is now prince in Dublin.' 'I am that Oli,' says the other. 'Then the dog is thine, but rob no more Christians!' And, instead of breaking the fellow's head, Oli turns serious and answers: 'Thou sayest well. I am baptized myself, and it ill befits me to prey on Christ's flock.' And from that time to this he has plundered only from men of our faith."

Again Thorir laughed loud and long; but Hakon did not laugh. His face was white and strained. Thorir, noticing, checked his own mirth, the ale-horn arrested halfway to his open mouth.

"This Oli," Hakon asked in a thin, toneless voice. "Why did the peasant call him Oli of Russia? You called him Oli of Ireland."

"He has estates about Dublin, where his father-in-law rules," Thorir explained seriously. "But before he sailed off on viking voyages, he lived in Russia, at the court of King Valdemarr, who loved him much."

For a time Hakon stroked his beard, his eyes wide with strange thoughts. At last he rose, and stood over his friend.

"Look you, Thorir," he said in low tones, his words coming slow and heavy, "you have been my friend for twenty years. You are wise and shrewd, for all your racing tongue, which never tells that which needs to be hidden. Now keep within your heart all that I shall say. You have seen this Oli. Does he look like any great man that has been in this realm?"

Thorir pondered, and soon his lips puckered in a whistle.

"There is that in his eyes and mouth which is like Hakon the Good, king of this land before Eric Blood-ax, and son of Harald Fair-hair," he said. "I saw Hakon six and thirty years ago, just before he died; and though I was a youth, his face was such as a man never forgets."

"It is true, then? And Hakon the Good, as men say, resembled Harald Fair-hair in all things, but most in the eyes and the mouth. What if——"

"But all the descendants of Harald Fair-hair are dead!" exclaimed Thorir.

"I wish I knew that that were so. I have done my best to make the people believe it. Do you remember, Thorir, the days when I was in the service of the Mother of the Kings and played at being a Christian? Do you recall the murder of Tryggvi Olafson, grandson of Harald Fair-hair? And that Tryggvi's widow fled to an island, where she gave birth to a son? Could this Oli be Olaf Tryggvason, born on that island in the midst of pursuit?"

Thorir's frank eyes grew cunning; the merry lines in his cheeks turned into lines of crafty thought.

"If I remember aright, Astrid fled from that island with her boy to Ofrustad, and thence to Skaun, whither you pursued her, with orders from the Mother of Kings to take her and the child alive or dead."

"Even so," Hakon confirmed, "and I found them not. A dog of a peasant guided me amiss."

"But that hawk catches no fish, for it is common report that they took ship from Sweden to Russia, when the child was ten years old, and on the voyage were captured and slain by pirates, both mother and son."

"Aye," said Hakon; and the words came hoarse and dry from his throat. "But I have friends in Russia, and I know from them that mother and child were both spared, and were sold as slaves in the market of Novgorod. Within eight years afterward, there was an Olaf at the court of King Valdemarr whom men praised for his skill in war, his mercy toward the conquered, and his merriness. And now you tell me that Oli of Ireland came to Dublin at the

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end of a viking cruise begun in Russia, where he was much loved by Valdemarr. It fits too well."

THORIR was on his feet now, gasping at Hakon like an overfed fish.

"And if it be true," he cried, "if Oli is Olaf Tryggvason, then the line of Harald Fair-hair is not extinct, and the blood of the old kings still lives!"

"If it be true," Hakon answered wearily, "then my grip on the scepter is broken."

Thorir clapped him on the shoulder.

"Not so, man!" he encouraged. "True, if the people get to learn that there lives yet one of the old line, then it will indeed be over with your throne and your life. But they will not learn!"

Hakon caught the gleam in the other's eye and his spirit flooded back into his heart.

"I catch thy meaning!" he cried. "He has not yet revealed his blood to any, or the tidings of it would be all over the world; and there is yet time to prevent him from revealing it!"

"Aye, provided he is really Tryggvi's son. There are many Norwegians in Russia, and Olaf is a common name. There may be no danger in him after all."

Hakon shook his head.

"I can take no chances. I must find out his birth and parentage; and if he is Olaf Tryggvason, whom I hunted vainly in his childhood, then I will hunt him again! But this hunting must be silent and crafty, for no one in Norway save us two must know that a man lives with better title to the throne than I. These Thrandheimers always loved the house of Harald Fair-hair, excepting only Eric Blood-ax and his sons. Moreover, they have shown their teeth against me lately and though they are quiet now they would rise as one man if Tryggvi's son came back to life to lead them."

"Did not your fight with the Jomsborgers win them back?"

"Things have happened to rouse them since."

Thorir whistled shrilly.

"The old story," he said seriously. "Look you, Hakon. I have my ship here, and a sturdy, silent crew. Do you give me supplies and a sum in hand for wages, and I will sail to Ireland, worm my way into Oli's confidence and find out who he is. If he proves to be Olaf Tryggvason, I will sound him cunningly as to his intentions, whether or not he has designs on Norway."

"That is good so far as it goes," Hakon agreed. "But if he is of the blood of Harald Fair-hair, he must die. Make yourself his friend, Thorir; pretend that I am your enemy and have driven you from Norway. Tell him that the people hate me, are on the brink of rebellion against me, and wait only for a leader. Say to him that they will follow any of the blood of Harald Fair-hair, and that he need not wait to collect a force, but must come at once, before the hour is past.

"In the meantime I will be winning the people to me with rich gifts and honors, will lighten the taxes, will send south for trusty men whom I will send among the Thrandheim folk to stir up talk about the Jomsborg fight, that they may remember my victories and be inclined toward me. Then, when Olaf comes, I will fall upon him with overwhelming force and blot him from life."

"It is a good plan," Thorir commended. "But if he should land, even with a single ship's crew, before your host is collected, and if he has as much as a week's time to spread word that he is the great-grandson of Harald Fair-hair come to claim his kingdom, then so many would flock to his banner that you could not hope to face him. Your Thrandheimers would be the first to rebel, however you placate them now; even the south, hitherto so faithful to you, would rise at the first word that the descendant of Harald Fair-hair was raising his banner.

"Fair-hair is long dead, but there is in his name a magic stronger than all the homage you can buy with gold. You must fall upon him at once, with your fleet, before his keels scrape Norwegian sand. And to do that, you must learn of Olaf's intentions before he sets sail. I can not come back and tell you of them, for that would rouse his suspicions. You must send a trusty fellow with me who will be privy to just enough of the plan to keep him safe, and whom I may send back ahead of me to warn you of Olaf's purposes, numbers and the place where he intends to land."

Hakon thought deeply.

"I have some sturdy lads, faithful fellows too, but I need them here," he reflected. "Ha!" He slapped his thigh, and his eyes gleamed cunningly. "I will send Einar Thumb-shaker!"

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"The boy of whose deeds with the bow men sing even in the Wick?"

"The same. He is loyal and is in my way here."

Thorir raised his shaggy eyebrows and laid his hand on his sword-hilt.

"Nay, old friend. Einar is valuable to me still. Beside, if aught happened to him, I would lose one of the few who will obey me faithfully and without question—in all honest matters."

Thorir laughed gustily.

"But all thy affairs are not honest, is it not true?"

"Let that pass. He is in my way, and the voyage will remove him from it. When he returns, certain matters will be settled as I would have them, and the land will be in my grip faster than ever. When you have learned all you can from Oli, if he be indeed the man I fear he is, you must stay with him, as you say, to avoid suspicion. But you will send Einar back with a full report for me; and I will hasten to whatever port Olaf has chosen for his landing and crush him before he can so much as shout his name. But do thou not tell more to Einar than he needs to know; for the lad has scruples and will not go against his troublesome sense of honor."

"Leave me to play with him," the merchant laughed.

"And now I will have him up hither, for he must learn the affair from my own lips, or he will doubt."

WHEN EINAR entered the chamber, Hakon was his old kindly self. There was no hint of his anger, no trace of irritation at the failure of his base scheme against Orm. He presented the youth to Thorir with gracious praise. As for Thorir, the lines in his cheeks were merry again, the laughter in his eyes was such as would charm the heart of a misanthrope, and his jolly, good-fellow manner won Einar at once.

With what seemed the utmost frankness Hakon told just so much of the matter as seemed prudent and gave it his own cunning twist.

"Thumb-shaker," he said, "I have summoned you to perform a task too great for your youth, but not too great for the high spirit in your heart. Your good faith, so often proved in my service, has caused me select you rather than any other of my warriors; for I can trust you. I have word from Thorir that there is a fellow in Ireland, the son of an escaped slave of mine, who deceives the folk there with a false tale that he is Olaf Tryggvason, great-grandchild of Harald Fair-hair."

"But all the race of Harald is dead!" Einar interrupted.

"That is true talk, as I know well," lied Thorir, "for I myself captured the viking ships which had seized him and his mother Astrid. Neither mother nor child was on board. They had both been murdered."

Einar's face flushed with indignation.

"And does this slave dare assert himself against the earl?" he exclaimed.

"Not only that," Hakon replied, "but there is talk that he purposes leading a fleet against us. There are many in the land who might be deceived by his lies. I can not dispatch my own ships against him, for he is son-in-law to Olaf Kvaran, whose forces are too strong for me. So I am sending Thorir to Dublin, to discover what following he has, and just how he plans to carry out his evil designs. Thorir will tell him certain things to befool him; do you listen well to all that Thorir says, and see that your speech agrees with his.

"If the fellow decides to make war against me, Thorir will send you back ahead with word for me and you will report to me carefully all that Thorir bids you. This errand calls for skill and loyalty; for men say that this Oli, as he calls himself, is cunning, so that he wins the hearts of men with his falsehoods and sees through the lies that men would tell him. So use your brain well, keep your tongue smooth and well-guarded and be not shaken from your loyalty."

Einar's eyes were wide and serious.

"You may trust me, O Protector of the Land!" he swore.

"I have never doubted it. Say nothing to any one here of your errand or destination. It will be given out that you sail to England with an important embassy to King Ethelred. There will be good fortune in it for you, for an ambassador to a king has princely standing and much honor. Moreover, I will reward you well; as an earnest of my favor, wear this for me."

The earl unfastened from his shoulder his jeweled brooch, a fine emerald in a setting of purest gold, and fastened it in Einar's linen half-coat.

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"The ship sails in the morning," he concluded. "The gods go with thee and strengthen thee for thy task!"

As Einar departed from the presence with the pleasant Thorir, it was as if some faint echo of his former admiring affection for Hakon had stirred again in a corner of his heart. Though he knew the earl for a man without honor and without shame, he felt the fascination of his charm and still revered him as the valiant defender of the land. And this man, his lord, the pillar of Norway, was threatened by a pretender to his throne, by the audacious son of a slave, who plotted to bring death and bloodshed on his people! But of one thing the archer was certain: the slave would not succeed while Einar Thumb-shaker could fit shaft to string!

CHAPTER XI

OLI

ALL pretense of an embassy was dropped, to the crew as well as to themselves, as soon as Thorir and Einar gave orders to change the course and make for the South Isles. It had been intended only to deceive the Norwegians. So around the Shetlands and Orkneys they sailed, through the troubled waters of the Minch and the Little Minch, and into the Irish Sea.

As they passed the splendid rock and green grassland of Ireland's Eye and raised the bold promontory of Howth, two long war-ships rowed forth to meet them; but the well-known banner of Thorir, the famous merchant, disarmed their suspicions. So the voyagers steered safely into the great half-bowl of Dublin Bay and came to anchor on the north side of Liffey Mouth, where the North Wall quay now is.

It was a wondrous sight that gladdened Einar's eyes. To north and east lay great expanses of green fields, bordered by the serpentine river; the bay itself, in spite of its size, was alive with long-ships and sailing-craft; to the south rose the heather-coveredfoot-hills of the Wicklow Mountains.

A troop of mounted Irish spearmen halted them as soon as they set foot on shore. Shaggy, unkempt, but beautifully mailed, the horsemen were commanded by a young Norwegian in barbaric Russian armor. Him Thorir greeted courteously, though with a shade of familiarity:

"Ho, Eymund! My eyes rejoice to see you. Is it well with you, and with Lord Oli?"

"It is well," the officer answered. "Christ be with you, good heathen, and enlighten the blindness of your soul. Oli is even now returned from the wars in Northumbria, where he has beaten a host of your godless countrymen and their renegade allies of Mercia. Perhaps you would like to come to court and meet him again?"

"Gladly would I, and this young man with me, for we have news for your lord."

"Then I will escort you. Bide but till I have turned my fellows over to Asgaut."

As Eymund rode off, Thorir whispered to Einar:

"Remember, we are exiles, driven here by Hakon's harshness. Forget not your lesson."

But the archer answered:

"Be you an exile if you will; I have thought the matter over and will not deny the service that honors me. There may be men here who know of the favors I have received from Hakon, and it would be hard to deceive them."

"The youngster has pith in him!" Thorir muttered. "He sees farther than his nose-end!" Then aloud: "But then I can scarce be an exile either, being in your company. But I have hit it; we will be men the earl has wronged. Do you follow my lead."

Now Eymund returned, followed by a sturdy Irish groom with two led horses. The travelers mounted and rose with the guardsman over the excellent highway that wound along the green banks of the Liffey. Not till nine miles passed did they come within sight of the royal buildings of Olaf Kvaran, Norwegian King of Dublin and father-in-law to the mysterious Oli.

"But Kvaran is in England, visiting the Saxon Ethelred," Eymund told them. "Gyda, Oli's wife, has ruled while both princes were away; and well has she ruled, too."

Thorir was busy pointing out to the marveling Einar all the wonders of that goodly city now spread out before them. The court, surrounded with a high palisade reenforced with walls of turf, extended over perhaps six acres of flat land and culminated in a splendid hall crowning a low hill. The hall itself was greater than the entire garth of Hakon; the extensive outbuildings grouped around it were the quarters of the

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chief lords of Dublin, the bowers, barracks, kitchens and stables. Outside the palisade, covering the plain for eight or nine acres more, lay villages of low wattled houses. Along the river, shipyards covered the north bank, as far back as the eyes could see.

"Truly, this Oli is a mighty lord!" Einar exclaimed.

Eymund laughed.

"Not his, but Kvaran's, is all this magnificence. Oli will one day be his heir, and even now he has great estates in Mercia; but till Kvaran dies he has only the dower Gyda brought him. That is enough, though, for eight hundred warriors and five ships of war go with him to battle."

Little enough, thought Einar, for one who aspires to Hakon's throne; but too much for a slave's son. But if Olaf Kvaran backed his pretensions. . . .

They rode through the gate, between two rows of armed warriors, all either Norwegians or hairy Russian mercenaries. Thorir naturally made to dismount at the hall, but Eymund seized his rein and led him around the principal building into an open court filled with men.

"My lord is here," he explained, "and it is needful that you greet him first."

Oli sat on a great stone slab at the east end of the court, a group of armored, stalwart chiefs standing about him. Between him and the travelers, surrounded by soldiers, perhaps two hundred men were packed together, their arms bound behind them. Most of them were Norwegians; but some, by their cropped yellow hair and coarse-meshed mail, were clearly Englishmen.

Einar had eyes only for the chieftain enthroned on the stone. He was a big man, this Oli, well over six feet, beautifully proportioned, his splendid muscles swelling the loose folds of his linen overcoat. But it was his face which set him apart from all other men Einar had ever seen. High, prominent cheek-bones, wide and well-muscled jaws, a strong, square chin with clean lines, spoke him a man of forceful, dominating character. But his large hazel eyes, at once commanding and gentle, shone with a radiance the archer could not understand; for through them looked the soul of a mystic.

There was in them the vision of a martyr, the fervor of a zealot, the strong reliance of the Christian warrior upon his God, and through that God, upon himself. Before him the captives of his sword awaited judgment, and he looked upon them without exultation, without cruelty.

SEEING the new-comers, he beckoned them to him. Thorir he greeted with quiet dignity, then looked expectantly at Einar, who spoke for himself.

"I am Einar Eindridison of Gimsar," he announced, "in the service of Hakon Jarl. Being Thorir's friend, and somewhat under the earl's displeasure, I have come hither till the clouds that threaten me at home have scattered."

For he was determined not to deny his service; and he knew that a straightforward confession that Hakon had sent him would discredit both himself and Thorir and put an end to their mission.

Oli started at Hakon's name. For the first time his fine eyes gleamed like steel. The expression passed, but he scrutinized Einar steadily, his gaze searching the young man's very soul.

"Did Hakon banish you?" he questioned.

"No. There is no open quarrel between us."

Oli shifted his glance suddenly to Thorir.

"Art thou also in Hakon's service, Merchant?"

"Not I, lord." The trader's face assumed an expression of utmost frankness, even of injured innocence. "Hakon has wronged me grievously, wherefore I left his land, wishing not to be driven into arms against the only man who upholds our country against its enemies."

The speech was well devised, and Thorir had the satisfaction of seeing the doubt in Oli's face vanish. The prince considered.

"Well," he said finally, "ye have come to a friendly place. Are you that Einar whom men call Thumb-shaker, who shot so valiantly against the Jomsborg vikings?"

"The same," Einar admitted. "But I did not know men had heard of it here."

Oli smiled, and the smile transfigured his face. Clearly they were right who called him a merry man. Handsome at all times, he won the hearts of men to him when he smiled. Einar, in spite of the prejudice against him which Hakon's lying words had instilled into his mind, saw at once that this was a man of kind and clean heart.

"Thou art too modest," Oli laughed. "Men speak of thy shooting all along the

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five seas. I am glad that thou hast come to me. But stay now, and wait for me till I have passed judgment on these fellows."

His eyes lifted from them to heaven; for a moment he sat silent; then he turned to the prisoners with the look of one who has sought and found higher counsel than that which abides in the hearts of men.

"Thorgeir the Norwegian, Thorgeir the heathen, thou hast fallen into my hands with the flower of thy people," he addressed the principal captive, a fierce-looking soldier with the gold circlet which marked him an earl of the Scandinavian kingdom in Northumbria. "Wilt thou accept the pure faith of Christ and live, or wilt thou die in the sin of thy false superstition?"

Thorgeir looked back proudly at Oli without fear.

"Is the death with torture?" he asked.

"Not so. I offer thee a clean life or a clean death."

"Then will I die in the faith of my fathers and go stained with my blood to Odin's hall!"

Oli signed to one of his warriors, who stood by with drawn sword. Thorgeir stretched out his neck, the sword flashed, and the soul of the Northman passed.

Then, his eyes alight with a yearning tenderness, Oli rose to his feet.

"O ye children of darkness!" he cried in a loud voice. "Come to the light, to the true light of the living God! Do not die in your sins, to perish eternally in the fire that consumes flesh and soul, nor ever is extinguished, but be born again into the love of Christ, which bears the repentant sinner to everlasting joy! Force me not to strike again with the sword of God's wrath, but let me forgive you even as He forgives!"

One of the bound men, a chief by his scarlet cloak, came forward and knelt at Oli's feet.

"I will accept Christ," he declared.

His conqueror at once embraced him, kissed him on both cheeks and cut his bonds with his own dagger.

"Be thou free!" he cried. "I take thee into my own service, as Christ takes thee into His! Will not ye also repent, ye others who walk in darkness?"

A second came forward between the armed guards; then a third, a fourth, and many more, till well-nigh a hundred men had forsaken red Odin for the white Christ. Them too Oli received with joy and kindness, bidding the soldiers unloose their bonds, give them food and drink and admit them to the fellowship of his court.

But forty more of the Norsemen still stood sullen and defiant, and the threescore that remained beside them, being English and already Christian, had not yet been addressed. The enthroned Oli gazed down upon the forty with eyes of sorrow, that gradually hardened into anger.

"Do ye refuse Christ then, and prefer to die in the filth of your heathen blackness?" he demanded threateningly.

"The old gods have been true to us, and we will be true to them!" one shouted in defiance.

"Is this the will of all of you?"

The captives chorused their assent fearlessly and loud.

"Then may Christ pity you hereafter, for He bids me slay you now! Lead them away to the place prepared!"

And a file of soldiers conducted the doomed men slowly from the court.

Oli now fixed a baleful gaze upon the handful of Englishmen.

"Ye are they who were sown among stony places and sprang up quickly, having no thickness of earth!" he accused them. "And when the sun was up, ye were scorched, having no root, and withered away! Englishmen and Christians, ye dared not fight for the faith that was in you; but, fearing these heathen of the North, ye joined with them against your own countrymen, against the banner of the true God! What defense have ye now against God's wrath? Why should I not bid you be given to the tortures, as men who denied their faith?"

A tall, stoop-shouldered man of middle age answered for his people.

"I, Egfrith of Anglia, would speak for my folk," he craved, and when Oli nodded, he said:

"Not our flesh feared the heathen, but our hearts. They dwelt among us and all about us, their spears hedged us round as wolves ring in the sheep. We could have died for our faith gladly; but we have wives and children, whom these wolves of Satan would have shamed and slain, yea, sacrificed to their gods, had we not joined with them against thee. What could we do? Is the love of our women and children not dear to us?"

Oli bowed his head.

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"The strongest of Satan's wiles is the love of our dear ones," he answered sadly. "The sin ye have committed cries out for blood; but Christ came to save sinners. It is not for me to cast the first stone against you; that which tempted you was too strong for men to resist. I pardon you. Go free, but —" and his eyes blazed—"sin no more, or it were better that a millstone were hanged about your necks, and that ye were drowned in the sea! The time will come, when God wills it, that I will go through all heathendom with flame and sword, crushing out unbelief wherever it hides its head, and making all these islands, yea, and Norway itself, safe for Christ's flock!"

HE WAS on his feet once more, his features luminous with a light from within, his eyes flashing fire. As he spoke of Norway Thorir Clack glanced quickly at Einar with an expression of triumphant cunning. But Einar saw him not; he was gazing at Oli with flushed face and beating heart. He did not understand all he had heard, but he saw one thing clearly: this was no slave's son, this was a king!

Oli's face, his bearing, the light in his eyes, all trumpeted forth a manhood, a glory of soul, such as Einar had never known in any other man. No less was he affected by the unknown, rich words of the Scripture that fell from Oli's lips, sounding like the thunderous tones of an angry God. The English renegades, to whom these words meant far more, crept from the presence with hearts that were torn with shame and pounding with relief.

"So, it is done." Sighing, Oli turned to his guests.

He glanced quickly at Thorir, smiled once more upon Einar and asked quietly——

"How fares it with Norway?"

"Badly, O king."

Unblushingly Thorir gave him the royal title, but with no apparent hidden meaning in his voice. The merchant's words were instinct with innocence and sincerity.

"Why callest thou me king?" Oli was quick to catch him up.

"Because this day I have looked upon the face and heard the words of one born to rule."

"Tomorrow is in the hands of God," Oli replied. "But tell me of Norway, for my heart yearns to the land of my birth."

"Then thou wert born in Norway, lord?" Thorir questioned cunningly.

Oli frowned.

"Have I not said it?"

"Even so. Norway groans, O my lord, and there is none to hear her. The tyrant who calls himself earl starves the people through heavy taxes, stabs in the dark all who oppose him, shames the women of his proudest vassals; yet there is none who can resist him."

Oli's eyes kindled.

"Do not the people dare to rise against him?"

"Who is there to lead them, lord? Hakon Jarl is of better blood than any in the land, since the line of Harald Fair-hair perished, and he is stronger than any king Norway has ever had, save Fair-hair only. If there were but one of that race——"

Oli searched the merchant's ingenuous features, but they were as frank as a child's. He turned to Einar——

"Are these things true, Thumb-shaker?"

"Thou hast heard," Einar answered.

"What," Oli asked, with seeming indifference, "would happen if it proved that there lived one of Harald Fair-hair's race, who would dare to lead the people against Hakon?"

Thorir pumped hypocritical tears to his eyes.

"Then, O my lord, the people would rise as one man to follow him! They would turn their spears against the tyrant who oppresses them, tear him to pieces and enthrone their liberator!"

"Think you so, Einar?"

"I think so," Einar answered; for it was the truth.

"Then go, Thorir, and rest in the hall from your voyage. My servants will give you food and drink. Nay, stay but a moment, Einar, for I would speak further with you."

When Thorir was out of hearing:

"As you are an honest man, tell me whether this is indeed truth," Oli commanded. "I do not altogether trust that silk-barterer."

"He speaks truly," the boy answered unwillingly.

Knowing as he did that his assurance would convince this man and, if he were indeed Olaf Tryggvason, would surely lead him to his death, Einar was merely carrying out the earl's commands and was speaking

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the entire truth. But he felt like a murderer. His heart told him that this Oli was no slave, but indeed a man of princely blood, and most surely the descendant of Harald Fair-hair. Features, bearing, actions—all were those of a man well-born, great-hearted, eminently fit to rule.

Therefore, by remaining faithful to his earl, Einar would lure to destruction the true heir to the throne, to whom he owed a more real allegiance than to the usurper Hakon. And his recent observation told him that Oli was as much nobler and better than the earl as that Christ in whose name he had just shown mercy to captives was nobler and better than the foul gods who had demanded little Erling's blood.

Nor was there any doubt in Einar's mind that that Christ, whether true God or not, was one whose deeds, as revealed by the acts of His servant, were good deeds. For the old gods sanctioned—nay, required—cruelty, bloodshed and rapine. Odin smiled on the man who blotted out most lives, who sacrificed most captives; Thor drank the blood of living victims; even the gentle Freyja tolerated the outrage of maidens and heard the prayers of their ravishers.

Therefore Einar was troubled in his heart and, plainly seeing his trouble, Oli knew him for an honest man. He walked about the court with his guest, laying his arm confidingly about Einar's shoulder; and at last he said, as if in sudden resolve:

"All men speak of your brave deeds, good Einar and courage, at your age, is commonly still accompanied with honor. I dare count upon your good faith as I dare not count on Thorir's. I know you serve Hakon, and I would not put your loyalty to strain; but my heart tells me that by trusting you I can find an answer to the questions Thorir's tidings have roused in my mind. Therefore I will reveal to you the secret I have hidden from all save my wife and her father, and leave the decision to you.

"THE race of Harald Fair-hair is not dead. For I am Olaf, son of Tryggvi, son of Olaf, Harald's sixth son. You have heard, as have all men, how the Mother of the Kings sought my mother Astrid's life and mine, though she was a woman and I a little child. Yet you have not heard how we escaped, for men believe that pirates slew us off the Esthonian coast. They slew us not, but sold us into slavery in Russia, parting me from my mother.

"I was bought by one Sigurd, who, as it proved, was my own uncle. I was a little lad still, though we had lain in hiding in Sweden several years before we sailed; yet I was old enough to know my birth and to tell Sigurd my name and kindred. So, recognizing in me the child of his sister, he set me free. In all these years I have never since set eyes upon my mother. But lad, why art thou trembling?"

Einar was trembling indeed, for he knew now in very truth that the man whose arm encircled his shoulders was his king, and he was thinking how he had been sent from Norway to entrap the true heir of the kingdom, who was even now confiding in him. Yet he controlled himself and answered—

"I grieve that thy mother is lost to thee."

Olaf smiled tenderly.

"Grieve not. It was God's will, and perchance I may find her yet, as I ever long to do. But thou hast not heard all. I grew up with Sigurd, till one day I met, in the marketplace of Novgorod, a man whom I held in hate ever since I stood, a little lad, on the slave-block. For my foster-father, who had fled with us, and with us had been captured by the vikings, stood by my side waiting a purchaser. This man bought him, but afterward, seeing that he was too old to serve, slew him before my eyes.

"So now, when I met the murderer once more, I clove his skull with my ax. The law claimed me for murder; but the Russian queen saved me and took me into her service, where I remained till six years ago. Then God sent me to sea, though I knew not it was His hand, for I was then a heathen even as thou art. For four years I ravaged the peaceful coasts, spilling innocent blood, plundering heathen and Christian alike; till Christ laid His hand upon me in England through the teaching of a holy man. My heart was changed; but it takes long to purge away the evil practises of the old gods from a Northman's heart.

"Still I took what came to my hands, and shed innocent blood. Not till a daring herdsman spoke the truth to me concerning my evil deeds did I fully see the light, and since then I have shed no Christian blood save the blood of renegades. From that time on I have striven to order my ways and instruct my heart in the knowledge and love of God, excluding all hate from my breast, slaying only His enemies, and exercising

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toward all who believe in Him, or will accept Him, the mercy which He commands. Yet there is one hate which I can not tear from my heart—" and Olaf's face grew terrible with wrath—"there is one man whom I can not forgive.

"That man is Hakon, your earl. He it was who hunted my poor mother and her little child through the Dales, through Agdir and through Skaun; he it was who struck fear into her innocent heart and drove her through sufferings beyond the strength of women; he it was whose persecution drove her into the hands of the vikings, whereby she was sold as a slave. Heaven knows what her fate may now be; and it has all come about through Hakon Jarl! Know you what he said, as his cruel riders galloped past the reeds, but a bow-shot away, in which she was hiding, her child clasped to her breast?"

Olaf's hand tightened on Einar's arm; his forehead was flushed and wet.

"He cried out:

" 'On, lads! Who kills the brat shall have the wench for a plaything!' As God is my witness, him will I never forgive till my sword is wet with his blood!"

Einar's teeth were clenched; his companion's fury found an echo in his own heart. Recalled by the savagery of this act of Hakon's more than twenty years past, the earl's shameful crimes rose up one by one before the young man in all their naked horror. He would gladly have laid down his life then and there, if by so doing he could only thrust Hakon from the throne and elevate Olaf to it without staining his own soul with treason.

Then his endurance broke. With a bitter cry he tore himself from Olaf's arm and pressed both hands to his temples. The court seemed to whirl about him; his world lay shattered at his feet. Groaning, he looked up at last to Olaf, and the sheer glory of the man's great heart overpowered him. The emotion which mastered Einar swept away the last shreds of that false loyalty which had bound him to Hakon; knowing his duty clearly now, he cried:

"Trust not Thorir! He was sent to betray you, as I was! Hakon commanded us to learn what you intended against him: and if you purposed violence Thorir was to lure you with false tidings of a Norway in revolt. My part was to return before you, with a report of your forces and the port you chose for landing, that the earl might fall upon you with a host before the people could know that one of Harald Fair-hair's race yet lived! Now I have betrayed my lord! Let me go, I pray you, to Hakon!"

Olaf laid a hand on the boy's bowed head.

"Let you go to Hakon?" He smiled. "And what would you tell him, lad?"

"I would tell him that you are coming, so that he may have a chance against you, as I have given you a fair chance against him! I will tell him what I have said to you and take his sword in my heart, as the reward of my treachery!"

Nor was this a mere rash resolve. Einar's betrayal of his master's plot was no mere emotional weakness, no helpless reaction to Olaf's confidence; it was deep-rooted in his inherent sense of justice and right, and that same sense taught him that, however well he had acted in forsaking a tyrannical usurper for his rightful and generous king, he was nevertheless a disobedient servant and must pay the penalty to save his honor.

But Olaf thought otherwise, though he understood the young man too well to argue with him.

"Treachery!" he smiled and shook his head. "What you take for treachery is your sheer honesty of heart! Yet tomorrow you shall go back to Hakon, if you like, in my swiftest ship. I will follow in three days, with five galleys; and I bring Thorir with me!"

Snatching the king's hand, Einar raised it to his lips.

"You are indeed king," he cried, "and the God that speaks from your heart is the true God of the world!"

CHAPTER XII

THE STORM BREAKS

EINAR said no word to Thorir of what had passed. It was not to his liking to confide in the merchant, whom he now guessed to be deeply involved in Hakon's wickedness. Both appeared at Oli's table in the evening, having been invited to a feast in honor of the Northumbrian victories, and found the company a great and merry one. At the table's head, beside her husband, sat Queen Gyda, a large, comely woman of majestic, even haughty

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bearing. But she was well-spoken as well as very beautiful, and it was easy to see that she was liked by the court.

The banquet was richer and more luxurious than any Einar had experienced in Hakon's hall; the dishes were of silver, the flagons of well-wrought gold. Ten kinds of flesh were served, including roast and boiled beef and pork, fowls roasted and seethed, and fish excellently cooked. Ale there was none, for Oli served his guests the finest Mediterranean wines, imported through England.

What surprized the two voyagers most was the absence of a skald; a minstrel there was indeed, who sang sweetly, but his measures seemed barbarous and trivial to Thorir and Einar alike. For he sang not the complicated stanzas of the North, purposely so composed as to baffle all but the initiated, but in the more direct, simple fashion of the English, so that all men might understand him.

Queen Gyda received Einar most graciously, making him sit at her left hand; Thorir, as a merchant, was shown to a place below the foremost warriors. In deference to the guests, she turned the talk on Norwegian matters, asking much about the people, their religion, their courage in war and their feeling toward Hakon. Both the guests answered much as they had done to Oli. In the meantime, the wine circulated freely, the warriors became merrier and more boastful in their talk, and all were in the highest spirits. When the feast was at its height, Oli rose to propose the first toast; and his opening words brought all the company to its feet:

"In the name of Christ the Lord, in that of His blessed Mother, and of the Father," he announced loudly, "I, Olaf Tryggvason, true King of Norway, do drink this cup to the memory of my martyred grand-uncle, Hakon the Good, who vainly tried to convert that land; and I swear by my soul's salvation that I will sail with five ships, within as many days, to bring all Norway under my crown and under the Church of Christ!"

Thorir caught Einar's eye; but the tumult about them seized the attention of both. Some of the warriors had sprung from their benches in amazement; others sat gaping; all cried aloud in wonder. For up to this time Olaf had kept his secret so well that his own officers knew not his birth. Yet none doubted: they had fought by his side in battle, shared with him the hardships of Winter marches, arduous campaigns, retreats, disappointments, as well as victory and wealth; and in all things they had found him a true man, just to his word.

Olaf still stood, his beaker in his hand, and now every warrior had risen. Soon their surprize gave way to enthusiasm; their love and admiration for him, mingling with their inborn love of adventure and raised almost to ecstasy by religious fervor, swept away wonder, doubt, hesitation. The toast was drunk in brimming cups. When the applause died down, Olaf spoke again:

"I have formed this purpose from the reports brought me by our guests, Thorir the merchant and Einar Thumb-shaker, whose valor is well known to you. Both told me the same tale, but Einar told more; for he is truthful, whereas Thorir is a lying, treacherous dog."

Thorir, white with sudden terror, nearly fell from the bench; but Olaf addressed him with mocking assurance:

"Fear not, friend of Hakon, for thou shalt have a chance to save thy skin. I have not told to any man where I shall land in Norway, nor will I do so, for I shall fall upon my enemy like lightning from a blue sky. Thou shalt go with me; as soon as our feet touch Norwegian soil, I will set up a tent and hold a solemn mass, whereupon thou shalt be baptized or beheaded, as thou mayest choose."

With shaking fingers Thorir strove to raise his cup to his lips; but the red wine spilled and ran down his silken sleeve. One of the warriors began to taunt him, but Olaf bade him be silent.

"It were better for you," he said, "to make this man your friend, false as he is; for God has given him great gifts and may yet save him to be a good man and a faithful servant."

AT DAWN Einar was roused from sleep, to find Olaf himself in the guest-chamber, bending over him.

"Your ship is ready at Liffey-mouth," said the king. "There is a small boat waiting at the bank near the gate to take you to her. The captain's orders are to land you on the coast of Raumsdale, whence you may make your way north to Thrandheim overland. Thus only can my men

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be kept safe from Hakon's treachery. I follow after and will pick up my ship after you have disembarked. You may tell Hakon what you will concerning the things you have seen here; it will do no hurt, for he will not live long to use the information you give him. Now Christ bless you and grant you to see the light."

IT WAS indeed a swift ship which Olaf sent east with Einar. Again and again they spoke craft of every kind plying between the Hebrides and the Norwegian coast, but they showed clean heels to everything. According to promise, the captain landed Einar on the coast of Raumsdale; and thence he started the weary six-day journey through the Meres and the great Orkdale forest. Habitations were few and far between, except in the widely scattered villages, and his arrows saved him from hunger for days on end.

He made straight for the river Gaul; for the many winding fiords between Raumsdale and Thrandheim made the way to his own estate of Gimsar much shorter than that of Ladir direct. Moreover, it was in Einar's mind that he would spend the last night of his travel with his grandfather and would tell the old man that which had happened to him in Ireland, before going on to Hakon. No time would be lost, and unless Styrkar were warned of the events which impended, he might easily lose his life in the bloody days ahead.

Late at night on the sixth day, now well into September, Einar reached the garth of his home. The days were much shorter now; the sun no longer lingered above the horizon throughout the night. It was fairly dark when he arrived. He was greeted by the baying of his grandfather's hounds; but the dogs, recognizing him as soon as did the watcher at the gate, broke into glad whining. Weary and foot-sore, but intent on seeing Styrkar at once, he went into the hall without delay. All was brilliantly lighted.

The old man, standing at the door, welcomed him joyously and led him within; but as soon as Einar's eyes became accustomed to the light he stopped short with a cry of astonishment. In a high cushioned chair by the fireless hearth, her strained, anxious face illumined by the glare of the torches, sat Bergliot. She rose to meet him, wearily, but with eyes shining with glad relief.

Silently Einar took her hand in his, bent toward her, and kissed her. Then, his own story forgotten in the surprize of seeing him there, he asked:

"What has happened? Is it well at Orm Lyrgia's?"

"Far from well," she answered, her voice throbbing with pain. "My father came to Medalhus with a great band of horse, slew Orm's servants and bore Gudrun away."

Einar stared at her, white-faced.

"And thou?" he asked.

"He took me too, though I struggled as hard as she. Orm was away in Skerdingstad, and there were none save the servants to resist. My father took Gudrun before him on his own horse, set me on another and spurred for Vigg, where his ship lies out on the fiord. But as we forded the Gaul I drew a little apart from the others, reached the bank first and broke from them. Straight hither I fled, knowing that this house alone in all the countryside could hold out against my father's men if Styrkar would defend me; and so it was.

"The horsemen were close on my heels, but I won through, the gate was shut in their teeth, and Styrkar bade his men bend bows and hold the garth. But, knowing the house was too stout to be stormed, my father rode on with bitter threats; for he feared to remain lest the peasants learn what had befallen and cut him off from his ship. So here I bide, until the peasants, to whom I have bidden Styrkar to send word, shall come for me. I think my father will not dare harm poor Gudrun while I remain in their hands."

Tugging angrily at his beard, old Styrkar growled:

"The more fool you, to put yourself in their hands. If I know Bergthor, the old savage will want to bury his ax in the golden coils of your hair. Say the word, and I will hold you safe from him as I did from the earl!"

But Bergliot shook her head.

"It may not be," she replied, "though I thank you from my heart. I went to Orm's house as a hostage, of my own free will; and now that my honor is all that remains of the honor of my house, I will not stain it. I am a pledge for Gudrun's safety, which I can best assure by returning to her husband's house with her people."

"When did this evil thing happen?" Einar asked abruptly.

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"But a little while ago. I came hither not two hours before you."

"Then do you, my grandfather, send a trusty messenger to Orm at once, with word to come hither speedily, with as many of the peasants as can quickly be gathered together. They have had time to rouse the men of the nearer villages already. Give me two swift horses and wait for me here."

"What fool's errand do you go on?" Styrkar snorted.

"On that which none but I can perform: to rescue Gudrun!"

The old man started a rumbling protest but, seeing that his grandson would listen to nothing, he complied. Within ten minutes a swift runner sped into the darkness and Einar, riding one horse and leading another, was headed for Vigg, seven miles away. Where the road branched off, he dashed across the fields, making as much speed as possible without tiring his horses.

The beasts were powerful Mere ponies, speedy and spirited, and fresh from several days of idleness and good feeding. It was but a little while when the pungent salt smell of the fiord stung his nostrils; and soon after, he saw the *Maiden* a few hundred feet from shore, her whole length ablaze with the light of many torches. Clearly Hakon feared nothing now, for his great galley was safe from attack by the little fishing-boats of the peasants.

Stripping off his cloak and boots, Einar plunged into the fiord and swam silently, straight toward the galley. But as soon as his head penetrated the flickering circle of light a hail rang out from the ship and torches began to flit hither and thither. In their light he could catch the glint of armor.

"On the earl's errand!" he cried and at once men tumbled into a small boat that lay alongside and rowed to meet him.

Recognizing him as soon as he was hauled into the boat, the officer cried out in surprise—

"A strange way to return from an embassy to England!"

"And a strange tale that I bring from England," Einar answered. "Take me to the earl without delay, for it concerns the peace of the realm!"

The officer laughed.

"It will be strange if you can see the earl at all tonight," he chuckled. "He has a pretty lass with him and will scarce wish to be disturbed."

They were aboard now and, as Einar turned toward the closed silken tent which Hakon had set up in the waist as his own cabin, the fury that glowed in his eyes escaped the officer's notice.

"Hakon will see me whether he wishes or no," he said. And, before any could interfere, he tore aside the hanging of the tent and strode in.

AS HE entered, two voices cried out at the sight of him, but with far different emotions. Hakon leaped up from his seat with an angry oath; Gudrun, crouching in the corner, gave a glad cry of joy. Without waiting for his lord to speak, Einar shouted:

"Save thyself, Hakon Jarl! Olaf Tryggvason has sailed for Norway with all his host! Even now he may have landed on thy shores!"

Hakon had expected invasion and planned to be prepared for it; but the suddenness of it overpowered him. His preparations were not yet made; he had not looked for attack till the Spring.

Beside himself with the shock and fear of the news, he leaped past Einar and burst from the tent in a panic.

"Up anchor!" he cried. "Out oars, and back to Ladir with all the speed ye may!"

Instantly Einar ran to the girl.

"Is it well with you?" he asked.

"Aye, well still, for he feared to harm me while his daughter bides with Styrkar or the peasants. But he frightened me sorely!"

"Can you swim?"

"As well as a man."

Without a word further Einar snatched off her mantle, picked her up and carried her out to the open space between the tent and the nearest rowing bench. As they emerged into the torchlight, Hakon saw them and cried to his men to stop them. But it was too late. Einar flung the girl out over the rail with all his strength and ran toward the stern, where the boat which had brought him was made fast by a long painter to a ring set in the gunwale. One sweep of his sword cut the painter; then, setting his back to the rail, he struck out fiercely at the men-at-arms who pressed upon him.

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The first fell at his feet, cloven to the jaw; the second stumbled as he rushed, and his head and body struck the deck separately, but at the same time. Those that followed paused a second in dismay: the interval was enough for Einar to vault the rail and rest his foot upon an outthrust oar. Then a blade whistled close to his head, so close that as he dropped to the water he felt the wind displaced by it on his ear. He came up close to the boat, just as Gudrun clambered over its side. Then he was in; as fast as he could he found the oars and pushed off.

Nor was he a moment too soon. A javelin flashed and stuck quivering in the sternboard. Another whizzed by just over their heads and disappeared in the water beyond them. Then, as Einar's strong arms drove the boat beyond the zone of light from the *Maiden*, came the twang of strings, and a dozen arrows buzzed past. There followed the sound of wood knocking against wood, the scrape of planks on planks, and he could see against the torch-light the black outline of a second boat being slowly lowered over the rail. It settled on the water, it was thrust out, and at least six oars splashed.

But this lead was more than enough in the short distance which separated the *Maiden* from shore. A few more strokes, and the keel grated on sand. Wet and dripping, man and girl scrambled ashore. Grasping Gudrun's hand in his, Einar ran for the spot where he had left the horses. Aiding her to mount, he wheeled her horse's head, and sprang to his saddle. Then, riding for life, they fled inland. But there was small need for haste; an excited hail rang out from the ship and the pursuing crew put about. The magic in the name of Olaf checked the chase.

Close together the fugitives rode, Einar shouting directions to the girl. She managed her horse well, for, like all peasant women of the district, she had been brought up to ride. The country was familiar to them both, and they dashed over the flat fields at full gallop. The moon was now up and shone so brightly that they could see quite well. Soon they caught the loom of the Gimsar buildings; a score of voices shouted to them to stop, and they rode full into a semicircle of excited peasants.

There could not have been less than seven score men in the gathering, all armed, and some clad in mail coats, for they were all veterans of the Thrandheim levy. As the riders reined up, Orm Lyrgia sprang forward with a glad shout and lifted his wife from her saddle. Bergthor and Styrkar dragged Einar down bodily and wrung both his hands.

"Art thou safe, Gudrun?" Orm asked in an agony of anxiety.

"Quite safe, thanks to Einar." Rapidly she told what had happened.

"Oh, what a foster-brother!" Orm cried and flung his arms about Einar's neck.

But now Bergthor pressed up, an ugly glint in his eyes, and spoke grimly:

"It remains only to take vengeance. We are seven-score men; the messengers we have sent forth will bring us thrice as many more by tomorrow night. Hakon's forces are divided, for Eric the Young is in Halogaland, raising a host, which we were told was to raid the Danish coast, but which was certainly meant for some evil. It will be a month before he can return. Let us march on Ladir as soon as the men of Orkdale and South Gaulardale have joined us, burn the tyrant in his hall and win back our ancient liberties!"

Fierce shouts of applause answered him, but Bergthor roared for silence.

"Just now," he snarled through grinding teeth, "we have work to do. An insult has been offered one of our women—not for the first time, but, by the gods, it is for the last! Hakon's daughter is here, in our hands. Let us avenge our wrongs in her blood!"

Einar's lips parted; but before he could speak, Styrkar thrust himself between.

"Bergliot has done you no harm," he said sternly. "She could have escaped your hands, but she chose of her own will to give herself up to you, so that Gudrun might be safe. You shall not reward such courage with murder. She is in my house, as my guest, and not one of you lays his hands on her. I expected this, though not from you, Bergthor. Such words sound rather like Ulf Wry-lip than like a man of your sort. My garth-gate is open, but my hall is defended by six and twenty men who will die by my side with bloody swords rather than permit such shame to their master's hospitality!"

Bergthor gripped his ax in an iron hand.

"She comes of an ill strain and must suffer for her father's sin," he answered

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stubbornly. "I will not permit the offence to my house to pass unpunished. Follow me, men of Thrandheim!"

HE TURNED toward the open gate and the peasants, with angry shouts, pressed after him. In a moment the assault would have rolled through the garth and upon the hall; but Einar ran forward and caught Bergthor by the shoulders, spinning him round. The archer knew he could not check the wild blood-lust of the peasants; but if he could divert it he might be able to hold them till they became calmer.

"Stop, in the name of the king!" he cried.

The strange word burst upon their excited minds in all its fantastic incredibility.

"What king?" shouted Bergthor. "We know no king. Only an earl know we, whom thou servest!"

"Old fool!" Einar retorted sharply. "If I served the earl, would I have snatched thy daughter from his very hands this night? I serve him no longer. Orm Lyrgia has said that I am a good foster-brother, and he should know, for tonight my love for him drove me to burst the bonds of allegiance which bound me to Hakon. The earl is henceforth my enemy as he is yours, and I have slain two of his housecarls in saving Gudrun from him. I serve not him, but Olaf Tryggvason, offshoot of Harald Fair-hair's line and King of Norway! Yes, Olaf lives; his ships are on their way to deliver you from Hakon! And I, who have spoken with him, declare to you that Olaf abhors the slaying of women and will avenge such a deed terribly!"

For a moment the peasants stood still in thunderstruck silence; then one spoke and all at once broke forth in a babel of astonishment, each asking unheard questions of his neighbor. At last Bergthor's booming voice made itself heard:

"If Olaf lives, as thou sayest, then we will bow down to him and serve him to the death. But first will we slay the daughter of Hakon, and next we will tear Hakon himself limb from limb! The death of his enemies displeases no man, and it will not anger Olaf!"

"Then spare her for thy son-in-law's sake," Einar pleaded. "My honor is his, and I, who saved his wife, am betrothed to Bergliot!"

But the effect of this was ill.

"Now the wolf is out of his hole indeed!" Bergliot snarled. "Now we know that thou are Hakon's man! What proof have we, save thy word, that Olaf lives, or that thou hast slain Hakon's housecarls? On, fellows!"

Once more the peasants pressed on with flashing weapons. In vain Einar and his grandfather strove to check them; in vain Orm Lyrgia, thoroughly on his foster-brother's side, shouted and wrestled with the obdurate Bergthor. Now, seeing that all was well-nigh lost, Einar burst between the few men who divided him from the angry Bergthor, flung him flatlong on the ground and ran into the house. At the hall-door stood four well-armed men of Styrkar's; as he came running toward them, scarce six paces ahead of the howling mob, they raised their weapons. But, recognizing him in the nick of time, they let him pass. Into the hall he rushed, caught a sudden glimpse of Bergliot standing pale, but still calm and unafraid by her chair, and snatched her up in his arms.

There was no way out save through the door, where Styrkar's men were even now crossing swords with the mob. In a compact column, the remaining two and twenty defenders waited at the hall-mouth, ready to take up the fight or to replace their comrades as they fell. But the attackers were in overwhelming force and Einar knew the struggle could not last long. The stairs offered the only refuge. Up them he scrambled, the girl's heavy weight taxing even his great strength.

Once at the top, there was a chance at flight; for in the rear wall there was a window, through which Styrkar's archers had often hurled back the savage raiders of Eric Blood-ax in the evil old days of the Mother of Kings. Making for it as fast as he could, Einar set Bergliot down, grasped the ledge, lowered himself and dropped with a thud that shook him. Then, unslinging his bow, he laid it on the ground beside him and held out his arms.

"Jump!" he called softly and Bergliot dropped into his grasp.

He took her weight squarely on his broad breast, but even so she bore him nearly to the ground. Quickly he hurried her toward the horses, which still stood as they had been left in the confusion of the attack.

But one of the peasants had heard his call

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and shouted the alarm. With one accord, the mob turned, left the door and poured toward the fugitives, leaving the bodies of three of their number and two of the brave defenders across the threshold.

Bergliot was mounted now, and Einar, leaping to the saddle, fitted an arrow to the string.

"It is dark, but my shafts seldom miss!" he shouted and struck out with his foot at Bergliot's horse.

The animal bolted into the night and Einar sat his own beast boldly, drawing the string past his ear.

Then, just in time, Styrkar's voice rang out.

"The girl is gone!" he cried. "Would you slay him who saved Gudrun? Cry quits, and I will forgive the attack on my house!"

Orm's voice answered—

"Who strikes another blow is my enemy!"

The peasants stood irresolute and Einar took up the word—

"I too forgive, and now I go to Olaf!" And striking his heels to his horse's flanks, he galloped after his betrothed.

There was no pursuit. The peasants, sobered by the bloodshed that had befallen, came to their senses. Not one of them but rejoiced in his heart that all had ended so well. Now that their blood was cooling, they remembered that Styrkar was their friend, who had long helped them in bad seasons from the store of his own barns, who had made it possible for Jomsborg's savage vikings to be withheld from their throats. They remembered, too, that he could be a harsh enemy, and confessed to themselves that they had been saved from a battle in which many of them must have died.

Most of them thought also of Olaf, believing now that Einar must have been sure of what he had said to speak so boldly. With muttered words of regret for the wrong they had committed, they turned away and went together, silently, toward Medalhus, where was the rendezvous for the following night.

Einar had now caught up with Bergliot and turned her horse's head south.

"Whither?" she asked. "There is no refuge in all this land for Hakon's daughter."

"There is one," he answered, "where neither the peasants nor your father would think of searching for you."

"Where?"

"With Thora of Rimul."

CHAPTER XIII

THE HOUSE IN THE WOOD

"THORA of Rimul?" There was doubt and dismay in Bergliot's exclamation.

"Why not? It is the last place in Norway where any one would look for either of us."

"But that woman——"

"She is not such a bad woman; she has never harmed any one as your father has harmed her."

Einar had not meant his answer to be harsh, but Bergliot's flushed face showed that she was hurt. Thora of Rimul had been Hakon's mistress, the one woman of the many in his life who had really loved the earl. She had felt for him an affection that survived neglect, faithlessness and brutality; when he deserted her, Thora had gone back to her own home without complaint. It was common talk that she loved him still. Her parents had been long dead; her brothers, maddened by the shame put upon their family, had died in a rash attempt to kill the earl.

Now she lived alone, save for two old countrywomen who had served her mother, in the decayed farmstead of Rimul, four miles south of Gimsar, and surrounded by the great Orkdale forest, through which the Gaul ran toward the fiord. Though not two miles from Medalhus, it was never visited by the peasants; for Thora, like other unfortunate women of her kind, was shunned. Though Hakon had not seen her since he had put her away five years before, the power of his name still protected her from other men, even the most turbulent. Rimul had virtually passed from the world.

The sky paled; dawn came, then the bright light of early day; and the sun rose above the horizon. Yet it was not bright in the wood. The dense foliage shut out the sun's rays till noon there; it was scarce possible yet to make out the color of the foliage. All was silent behind. Clearly there was no pursuit. The fugitives slowed to a walk; they were very close to Rimul now.

"My life is yours, even had you not saved it from them who would have slain me," Bergliot said at last. "Take me where you will."

They rode on slowly through the gradually brightening wood; little by little the

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dark heaviness of the experiences through which they had passed lifted from their hearts as the darkness of night melted from the forest. It was as if the return of light to the world brought light to them also. Their eyes sought each other more frequently, their hands reached out and clung, the joy of their love flooded back upon them.

A little way off, but invisible among the tress, the Gaul sang over its stony bed. The forest was alive with the song of birds; a startled rabbit leaped up beside the overgrown pathway; then, close at hand, there came the beating of wings and the full-throated morning song of a cock. The light brightened visibly, the trees thinned, and they rode out into a clearing. Before them, surrounded by a rotting, tumble-down palisade, rose a house, weather-stained and shaggy with moss and climbing plants. Young saplings grew up here and there about it; creepers and wild berry-vines intruded upon its domain. Through the garth wandered a flock of poultry, vocal and scratching for grubs.

An old, toil-worn peasant-woman was gathering berries from the tangled vines. At the sound of horses' feet she turned, stared at the strangers and without a word went into the house. Dismounting, Einar and Bergliot waited by the door. In a little while it opened and a tall, beautiful woman of little more than thirty came to greet them.

For a moment she scanned their faces; then, with a flush of confusion and pain, she said—

"Bergliot!"

For Thora of Rimul had known Bergliot five years before, when Hakon's court was her home and Thora was uncrowned queen of Norway. She bade her unlooked-for guests welcome, though with obvious constraint; but Bergliot, kneeling at her feet, took the woman's hand in hers.

"Ah, Thora, Thora!" she cried. "Forgive the evil that my house has done you, if you can forgive, and help me now!"

"Wherein can poor Thora help the daughter of Hakon?" the woman answered.

So Bergliot told her tale, a tale that, wounding both their hearts, brought tears to the eyes of each; and Einar, hiding his embarrassment by a pretense of looking after the horses, led the beasts to the stable in the rear of the house, rubbed them down and watered them. When he returned, the tears were over and both women were smiling.

"So this is Einar Thumb-shaker!" Thora greeted him. "Even here we know of you. My house is small for such a princess and such a hero, but it is yours for so long as your need may last."

Gravely Einar thanked her, but added:

"I am so little used to a house empty of weaponed men that it were best if I lodged in the hay-loft over the stable." For he knew that it would be hard for the women to spare a place for a man in the dwelling itself, and he did not wish to embarrass them.

Thora quickly had her two old women stirring about the kitchen, and soon a hearty breakfast was set out for her guests: trout, drawn from the Gaul the day before; wild berries in cream; warm milk, and new-laid eggs. Weary as they were, Bergliot and the archer felt their hunger so keen from the excitement and toil they had gone through that their plates had small need of washing. Then, thanking his hostess politely, Einar went out to the stable, climbed to the loft and flung himself down upon the deep-piled hay. It was almost sunset before he awoke, to find himself hungry again.

When he entered the house, he noticed at once some subtle change in Bergliot. It was more than her dress, though she had laid aside the garments she had brought to Orm Lyrgia's from her father's court and was now clad in a simple blue kirtle and robe of Thora's. Einar, after the fashion of men, scarce noted that her fine hair had been newly combed and coiled, for was it not always beautiful to his eyes?

He himself, fresh from his sleep and a bath in the cool Gaul, presented a different aspect from that of the morning; but the radiance in Bergliot's face was more than the freshness of rest and care. Thora, however, watching them both, knew well that it was the rising tide of happiness in their hearts which made each more glorious in the other's eyes, and her own memories flooded back with all their joy and bitterness.

At the evening meal she questioned Einar anxiously about certain tidings that had reached her ears through Bergliot's report of what she had overheard when, threatened by the maddened peasants surrounding Gimsar, the girl had listened to Einar's appeals for her life.

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"Is it true," asked Thora, "that Olaf Tryggvason lives and is on his way hither with ships of war?"

"It is true."

"Will he—will it go ill with Hakon?" she went on, her lips whitening.

This question Einar had been fearing ever since the night before, for he knew Bergliot had overheard his loud announcement of Olaf's impending arrival. He avoided Bergliot's eyes, therefore, and answered:

"I fear it. Olaf has an ancient grudge against the earl, which death alone can wipe away. Yet the son of Tryggvi is a merciful man, of a most noble heart; and it is possible that he may forgive, forgiveness being required of Christians by their God."

Thora was silent a while, then:

"A strange God," she said. "Ours have no such tenderness. You say that Olaf is merciful. Have you seen his mercy with your own eyes?"

So Einar told of his visit to the king in Dublin, recounted the tale of his dealings with the captured prisoners, Norse and English, and then added:

"But there is more than this, and more surprizing. I, who was sent to entrap him, being overcome by his greatness of heart, revealed to Olaf the plot which the earl had laid against him. But since I could not be altogether faithless to the man I served, I prayed Olaf to let me return and tell Hakon that he was coming with a host. What, think you, would have been another man's answer to such a prayer?"

Thora's eyes narrowed.

"A rope round thy neck," she said; and it was plain that she was displeased with Einar for imperiling the safety of the man whom, though he had wronged her sorely, she yet loved.

But Bergliot looked upon him with eyes glowing with pride; for, however she feared for her father's life, she knew the earl for what he was and realized that Einar had done well.

"A rope indeed," Einar went on. "But Olaf laid his hand upon my head and bade me go. So I sailed the next day in his swiftest ship and brought word to Hakon as I had promised. I think the earl would have slain me if he had been able, for he cried on his warriors against me; though that was because I took Gudrun from him. Now was there ever a man like this Olaf, who thinks so highly of another man's honor that, rather than stain it, he would let that man warn his bitterest enemy against him? Then indeed I knew that the God who put such noble thoughts into his heart must be the true God, and that ours, who sell victory and honor for blood, are false."

Thora gasped at the bold blasphemy, but Bergliot sat grave and thoughtful.

"It is true," she decided, "that the gods men worship may best be measured by the deeds of their worshipers, and this Olaf's deeds are good. But I would that I knew more about the teachings of his God."

"What need is there?" cried Einar. "Have I not told you enough? Are not mercy and honor greater than all else, and do you ask more of a God?"

Bergliot laughed lightly.

"Thou talkest like a man," she answered.

THIS heart full of his love, heeding naught but Bergliot's safety and well-being, Einar tarried four days at the house in the wood. They were happy days, but days of growing tension for the women, both of whom, though knowing Hakon, yet loved him and feared for him. There was this difference between them, that while Thora thought only of Hakon, feared only on his account, Bergliot thought also of Norway and the people.

Unspoiled by the selfishness and cruelty of the court in which she had grown up, she had always grieved at the people's wrongs, felt with them in their suffereings, and striven as well as she could to soften her father's stern mood. Now, after her sojourn at Orm Lyrgia's, she knew something of the lives of the peasants, of their brave, strong struggle for existence, of their deep-rooted love of liberty and the high esteem in which they held their honor.

The rapid, terrible events which had begun with the attack on Orm's dwelling had opened her eyes fully to that which she had never quite realized before: that no ruler, however strong and valiant, can oppress his people without becoming their enemy. She knew now that, more than all else, Norway demanded a ruler whom the people could safely love and trust, who would defend them not only against foes from without, but against the enemies of greed, ambition and lust within his own heart. And she recognized that her father, unfit to rule, must be hurled from his throne for the public good.

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Therefore, much as she loved her father, she still felt sure that the coming of Olaf must redeem the land; and it was with a mind torn between anxious fear for Hakon and hope for Norway that she awaited the events which were sure to burst upon them soon. She was proud, too, of her lover's part in them. Her heart told her he had done right in warning Olaf against ambush and treason, as he had done right in bringing his counter-warning to the earl; she was glad that he had severed the ties which bound him to Hakon. No man of honor could serve the tyrant now. Norway needed the undivided allegiance of her sons, and Norway looked to Olaf.

On the fifth morning Einar went out into the forest, having been strictly charged by Bergliot not to return without fresh game, of which their larder was in sore need. But luck was against him; he wandered far before he saw so much as a rabbit. At last, following a brook that fed the Gaul, he made his kill deep in the wood, where the water, flowing gently in a basin between high banks, was muddy-edged with the sharp hoofs of many deer. As he crouched in a thicket, he saw a young stag drinking alone, almost at extreme range, and dropped it with as true a shot as he ever laid at the targets.

Returning with the limp body over his shoulders, he heard the distant sound of many voices and, listening, made out that a large body of men was coming swiftly in his direction. He halted, eased the deer to the ground and swung his quiver in front of him. He felt safe, whoever the men might prove to be; for the woods were thick on all sides and few had such swiftness of foot as he.

The minutes passed; at length the first of the oncoming host appeared between the trees. They were tall, sturdily-made men, clad in skins; and, though armed, they wore no mail. Einar recognized them from their dress as Gaulardale peasants from the mountains to the south. From them he had nothing to fear, so he advanced to meet them.

But they surrounded him at once.

"Stand, fellow!" r ared the leader, a huge hillman with a brown beard that fell to his girdle. "Whose man are you? Hakon's?"

"Not I," he answered. "I am my own man, and Olaf Tryggvason's."

"Well for you, then. We are also for Olaf, though we heard of him but yesterday; and now we go to Ladir to drag Hakon Jarl from his hole. We are king's men, we mountaineers. Wilt thou go with us?"

"But how heard ye of Olaf?" Einar asked amazedly.

"Where dost thou live, that thou knowest not?" the other retorted with some contempt. "The land is ablaze with the news. Olaf landed in the south four days ago, in Hordaland. He called the chiefs of the district together at once and told them who he was. They hailed him as king with great joy, and now all Hordaland is in arms. So Olaf set up a tent and worshiped his God with prayer, while men with shaven crowns sang in a strange tongue. It is said that Thorir Clack was there, with a great string of beads and a cross about his neck. Of these things we know not ourselves; but the news spread through the land like wildfire, and the whole country is up in arms and marching on Ladir."

"Whither went Olaf?" Einar asked.

"He sailed north, to stir up Raumsdale and the Meres. Doubtless they are humming like an angry hive by now. We must get on, or these Thrandheim peasants will reach Hakon before us and rob us of our share in the game. But who art thou, and where hast thou been, lad, that thou hast not heard of all this?"

"I am Einar, whom men call Thumbshaker. I was Hakon's captain of archers, but I slew some of his men and fled from him, since when I have been in hiding."

"Well, then, come along with us, Thumbshaker! I have heard of thee before: thou hast struck many a good blow, but never better than those against Hakon's housecarls!"

"Nay, I will not come with you, for I go before you!" Einar answered and, shouldering his game, he ran off into the depths of the wood.

TWO HOURS later he burst into Thora's hall, flung down the deer and panted to the astonished women:

"The peasants rise, from the south even to Ladir! Farewell! There is work for me to do!"

Before they could speak, he dashed to the stable, saddled his horse and rode off to the north.

He thought first of crossing the Gaul at Medalhus, where he might pick up more

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news from the peasants; but Medalhus was deserted. He forded the stream, therefore, and made straight for Ladir. He had not yet formulated any clear scheme of action; but there were two things which he must do: first, find the main peasant force, and ally himself definitely with them; second, for Bergliot's sake, he must devise some means of keeping Hakon from their vengeance. Hakon must not escape, but it was Olaf's privilege to deal with him, and there might be some mercy in Olaf. Einar knew there would be none in the peasants.

Toward sunset he came to the banks of the Nid and saw, on the farther shore, a company of armed men drawn up between him and the Ladir road. Their arms and carriage told him they were peasants, for few of them wore mail; and without hesitation he urged his horse into the stream. As he gained footing on the shallows, he recognized among the men Bergthor, Orm, and Haldor of Skerdingstad. They also recognized him and let him approach. Bergthor hailed him, somewhat shamefacedly:

"Ha, Einar! Art thou with us? Hast thou forgotten my folly?"

"I am with you," he answered, "and I bear you no grudge."

The old warrior seemed much relieved.

"I was mad," he apologized. "But where hast thou been? Hast thou heard the news?"

"Somewhat I have heard." Einar evaded the first question. "Where is Olaf? Is Hakon yet alive?"

A growl of rage answered him.

"Hakon lives," Bergthor replied, "and has got away, the gods alone know how. We would have marched on Ladir the night after the affair at Styrkar's; but Styrkar persuaded us to wait till we had more men, and then to surround the court so that none could get out of it. We did so. By that time horsemen came up from Raumsdale, with tidings that Olaf had landed in Hordaland, and that the people everywhere were out to crown him king and kill Hakon.

"We flung a circle round Ladir, so that not even a rat could have crept through, while Hakon's housecarls bided within, trying to draw us near enough to fill us full of arrows. Yesterday at dawn the Raumsdalers and Meresmen came hither in thousands, and we put two lines of them east of the court from the source of the Nid to Oglo, knowing that Hakon would escape to Halogaland and join his son Eric if he could.

"Then at noon came the tidings that Olaf was off the mouth of the fiord with a fleet, and that Hakon's fourth son, Erlend the Tall, had joined battle with him with five ships. Aslak of Saltness, who brought the tale, tarried till Olaf had the advantage, and then rode hither as fast as horseflesh could carry him. He says that the battle could hardly have lasted an hour after he departed.

"We bided here, waiting for Olaf, and at night we built up the watch-fires higher than usual. But Olaf came not; and this morning—Odin knows how—Hakon was gone from Ladir with all his men! We have searched the court through and through; we have pulled plank from plank and roof from rafter, but to no avail, save that the loot was good. So we have warned the lads guarding the east, north and south to keep a sharp lookout, and were about to cross the Nid and hunt him in the Orkdale forest, when you came."

Einar concealed his relief. There was at least a chance now that Hakon would escape the peasants altogether and fall into Olaf's hands. He could not get out of the country entirely, for there was not a man in all Norway who would not gladly betray him. But where was Olaf? If he had crushed Erlend's fleet in the morning—and he must have done so, else Aslak could not have reached the Nid with the news by noon—then he should have sailed down the fiord and anchored off Ladir hours ago.

"Does no man know which way Hakon escaped?" Einar asked.

"If he knew that, we should not be here now," Haldor answered fiercely. "But it is our shame that we believe he must have crept through our own lines here, since here they were thinnest."

"Then what is there to prevent him from reaching the fiord at Saltness or Vigg and sailing away north in some fishing-boat?"

Bergthor laughed grimly.

"We made no such blunder as that," he explained. "There are a thousand men along the coast from here to Angrar, and a second thousand from Angrar to Vigg. If he makes for the water, we shall have him."

"Then there are but two choices open to him: to flee south into the Orkdale forest, on the chance of hiding there till he can creep between the peasants into the hills beyond; or to go southeast into Gaulardale. And I myself know that the Gaulardale folk are

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marching hither, so that he will be cut off from there. But have the shore-watch at Vigg no news of Olaf?"

"None yet; but they will send riders to us as soon as his sails show in the inner fiord."

"Then," Einar declared, "since Hakon can only go south, it were well if ye went through Skerdingstad to head him off. I go to Vigg to seek news of Olaf!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE KING COMES

ON THE very morning when Einar and Bergliot came to the house of Rimul, Olaf landed at Moster, a long, irregular island masking the mouth of Hardangar Fiord. There, for the first time since his babyhood, his feet touched the soil which his great ancestor, Harald Fair-hair, had ruled so firmly. Pitching his tent by the shore, Olaf had his chaplain, Eanmund of Essex, hold a solemn high mass, immediately after which Thorir Clack, preferring Christ and the Christian heaven to death and Valhalla, was baptized.

But surprizes were not yet over for Thorir. The sacrament concluded, Olaf rowed into the fiord itself, disembarked the entire crew of his flagship, and sent his officers into the chief towns and villages of Hordaland, to summon to him the leaders of the people. On the next day, at a great council, he announced to the assembled Norwegians his name and parentage and told them that he had come to take the crown of his great-grandfather.

"Hakon Jarl," he declared, "has misruled you for many years, saying falsely that the true kings were dead. Now Hakon's tyranny is at an end; there is an end to all murder and ravishing and oppression of this people. I am your king; will ye be my men and help me bring gladness back to Norway?"

Wisely, he said nothing then of his design to convert them to Christ.

For a time the Hordaland chiefs pondered this matter in silence. If the stranger's words were true, if he actually was of the blood of Harald Fair-hair, then their duty was plain. But where was the proof? Besides, they, as men remote from the earl's court, had not felt the worst of Hakon's tyranny, of which this man spoke so glibly.

If they should throw over their allegiance to Hakon and then find out that their Olaf was not the true Olaf, what would become of them? They could not serve an impostor without losing their honor entirely. To be sure, the stranger was a fine figure of a man, handsome, and a warrior of sorts, to judge from his appearance; but Hakon was handsome and a warrior too.

As they were deliberating, an old chieftain, stricken in years, was borne up in a litter by his housecarls. His beard, white as sea-foam, fell far below his belt; his hands trembled with palsy; but his eyes were still undimmed. Olaf, standing above the gathering on an ancient grave-mound, saw him from afar and requested the chiefs to make way for him. So the elder was borne even to Olaf's feet; and there, surveying Olaf from beneath his shaggy brows, he suddenly sprang from his litter with the agility of youth and stood erect on his feet for the first time in many years.

"It is indeed the king!" he cried in a shaking voice, while tears ran down his withered cheeks. "It is Harald Fair-hair himself, come back from the grave!"

And the chiefs, astonished less even by these strange words than by the miracle of their aged comrade standing once more upright before them—he, who had been carried wherever he went—broke into prolonged shouts of wonder and applause. The old man's words carried full conviction, for he was over a hundred years old and had himself followed Harald Fair-hair's banner. There was not one who doubted now that Olaf was indeed the man he claimed to be; not one who did not see in him the descendant of their rightful monarchs, the true King of Norway.

So, with their acclamations ringing in his ears, Olaf, like the prudent man he was, lost no time in making use of their support. At once he bade them announce his coming to their people, collect the peasants and march north and send swift messengers through all the neighboring districts with the news. Enthusiastically they obeyed. From Hordaland the word, carried by well-mounted horsemen, was carried south to Rogaland, east to Numdale, Thelmark and Haddingdale, north to the Meres and the wild mountains of Gudbrandsdale.

At one stroke Olaf had won over the very districts which had always been most faithful to Hakon: the south, which had suffered least from the earl's tyranny and rejoiced

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most in his conquests, went over bodily to the one man who could seduce them from their allegiance—the man whose veins bore the blood of Harald Fair-hair. In Olaf they saw reborn the glory and glamour of the ancient days, the days when Norway had reigned the supreme mistress of a mighty empire.

But Olaf waited not for their armies. Forthwith he put to sea again, and as fast as the favoring wind could urge, his sails bore him north toward Thrandheim, the center of discontent, the beating heart whence flowed the proud blood of Norway to the extremities of north, south, east and west.

He did not know that Thrandheim was actually in revolt against Hakon, though he believed the statement of Einar and Thorir that the peasants waited only for a leader. When he set sail from Ireland, Olaf expected to find the south hard to win away from the earl, owing to the popularity Hakon had won in the battle with the Jomsborg vikings. He had deliberately undertaken the conquest of an entire kingdom with five ships' crews—or rather six, for the galley which had brought Einar must be somewhere along the coast.

But he had not acted rashly: Olaf was brave, but he was never reckless. He was too sound a general to risk his men's lives on a mad gamble. He was acting on his understanding of Norwegian minds and hearts —a consideration which Hakon rarely heeded. Olaf knew that the very suddenness of his decision to invade Norway awoke the spirit of adventure in his own men, who were wildly enthusiastic. If he had waited a season to prepare a huge expedition, their ardor might cool at the thought of the dangers in the way. He confidently expected the south to turn to him if he could convince them of his identity, and here luck played into his hands.

He knew that between Einar's probable report to Hakon and the time of his own arrival Hakon would have little leisure to prepare against him; he was sure Hakon would not expect him till Spring. Here too he was justified. The only element he had not calculated upon was the mad folly which prompted Hakon, once he thought the land was lulled to sleep, to risk life and earldom for the satisfaction of his base desires. And it was this element which made Olaf's triumph certain.

Off Ox Isle, in South Mere, Olaf sighted the galley which had borne Einar home, waiting in a secluded cove for his arrival. In accordance with his secret orders, its officers had cunningly sowed the news of his impending arrival in the ears of the peasants in the coast districts round about, and he was obliged to go ashore once more to receive the homage of the people. Here, too, he learned of Hakon's attempt to seize a peasant's wife —Gudrun—in Thrandheim, and heard how the peasants of that vital region were in wild revolt against the earl. Raumsdale also was said to be in arms and ripe for a leader.

SO, WITHOUT delay, Olaf made for Thrandheim; and on the third morning after his landing at Moster he raised the cape of Agdaness, the northern outflung promontory that guarded the entrance to Thrandheim Fiord. There Thorir Clack, who had been overcome with astonishment at the ease with which the southern districts fell into Olaf's hands, realized to his extreme chagrin that his friend Hakon had not given him his full confidence.

The earl had mentioned a slight disagreement between the peasants and himself, but had averred that it would soon be over, that the victory over Jomsborg had left him secure in the loyalty of the people. There had been nothing said of any intent to enjoy the ravished favors of a peasant girl; no hint of a possible rebellion. Thorir had been faithful to his word, had lured Olaf to Norway with a force insufficient to conquer it, and now the land was ready to fall into this upstart's lap.

What was worse, he, Thorir, who had hoped to the last that Olaf would meet swift destruction as soon as he set foot on the soil of Thrandheim, and that he himself might relapse again into the easy ways of heathendom, now saw himself enmeshed in his own plots, doomed to lifelong Christianity, bound forever to the terrible Olaf.

For the defense of Thrandheim Fiord, the sole weapon of Hakon the Mighty against his deadly adversary, was a tiny fleet of five warships, no more than Olaf's own and individually smaller. Of all his great navy, Hakon had crews to man no more than these; for part of his men were away in Halogaland with Eric the Young and the peasant levies were now in rebellion against him. Yet bravely that little fleet dashed forth from the shelter of Agdaness, and gallantly it closed with the great galleys of Olaf.

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The first attack decided the battle. Olaf crowded his fore-decks with bowmen, whose shafts cleared the opposing vessels to the masts before bow grated against bow. Then, with a wild surge like the onrush of a tidal wave, his crews poured over upon Erlend's galleys as soon as the forces met stem to stem. Olaf himself was first to board, a javelin in each hand. Both spears found their mark through shield and mail.

Drawing his sword, the king charged down the streaming fore-and-aft bridge as a bear charges a pack of dogs. His trained warriors behind him, he raged furiously in the waist of the doomed ship, swept it to the stern, led his crew back, boarded a second and again bore victory with him. Four ships were cleared; Erlend himself, diving overboard, was swimming for shore when Olaf's eye caught the golden circlet on the young prince's head.

At once he hurled a javelin: the weapon struck Erlend at the base of the neck and pierced him through. The fifth of Hakon's galleys attempted flight, but, well-nigh surrounded already, it was forced upon the rocks at the foot of the cape and all its crew taken.

Then fate played its hand. Within a few hours' sail of Ladir, where it seemed certain Hakon must barricade himself for a last stand in his own hall, Olaf suddenly decided on what might have been a futile course. He would not put all to the hazard of one final fight, sure as the issue seemed in view of his proba y superior force and the certain aid of the peasants; first he would march inland, reenforce his little army of eight hundred with the hard-fighting up-country peasants and then swoop down upon Ladir. What decided Olaf for this course was his ignorance that Eric the Young, that mighty battler, was away in Halogaland.

So, discarding his galleys as worthless, now that he must win or die on the soil of his native land, he marched south. Toward midafternoon he met a band of peasants hastening east toward the Nid. At sight of his array they burst into prolonged cheering, for they knew this splendid stranger advancing at the head of such a host must be Olaf. They had formed the westmost outpost of the peasant-lines guarding the court; word had come from Ladir that Hakon had escaped, and they were closing in upon his only possible road of escape. At first Olaf was furious at their news; then he saw that this too might turn to his advantage, and he asked:

"What roads are open to him? What hiding-places? Whither will he be most like to flee?"

The peasant leader, Ulf Wry-lip, answered darkly:

"There is one road, and only one; one hiding-place, one house alone, which is open to Hakon the ravisher. Let me be thy guide, O king!"

And, with the brother of murdered Brynjolf to direct him, Olaf hastened south toward the head-waters of the Gaul.

CHAPTER XV

THE EARL'S FLIGHT

HAKON had no certain news of Olaf's landing, no tidings beyond the frenzied words of Einar when the archer snatched open the hangings of his tent on the *Maiden* and bore Gudrun away. Therefore he did not dream of the defeat and death of his son Erlend, not that his rule had already passed to another. But Einar's mere announcement that Olaf was near had been enough to send him back in frantic flight to Ladir; for the viking cruises of Oli of Russia had made that sea-king's name so dreaded, his exploits had been so daring, that Hakon feared him as he feared death.

Moreover, the earl, whose hardened conscience winced at the memory of the wrongs he had done Olaf, could in no way raise a force large enough to meet him. His housecarls on board numbered less than two hundred; the peasants were sure to revolt and cut him off from the supposedly loyal districts of the south—as indeed they did—and he expected that Olaf must have brought a great host with him. Hakon's sole hope seemed to lie in the five ships of Erlend.

If these could hold the invader at bay till he could somehow manage to join them, all might be well. At least he could sail to Halogaland, where Eric was raising men who would enable him to win back his ancient power.

But at the very moment when he might have saved himself by dashing out to the mouth of the fiord in the *Maiden* and joining Erlend at once, his ancient cunning deserted him. There were two-score good warriors left at the court, and their strong

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arms might be just enough to turn a possible battle in his favor. So back to Ladir he rowed, and before he knew what had happened the flames of revolt had been kindled and were spreading all about him. The peasants rose, surrounded Ladir, seized the *Maiden* as she lay at anchor and thereby cut him off from flight by water. His shipyards contained other craft, but these went up in flames as soon as the infuriated Thrandheimers reached the capital. He was shut up in his own garth, cornered like a rat.

Then, the night after Erlend's death, Hakon, still relying on his vanquished son's shattered ships, resolved to make a bold bid for safety. All about the court gleamed the watch-fires of the peasants. He knew that their guard would be most vigilant, strongest, on the east, between him and the Halogaland border; and the twinkling fires glowed thinnest on the west, where the Nid formed a natural obstacle to his flight. A quick dash through those thin lines, precarious as it was, might save him—unless the tumult of fighting and the outcries of the astonished peasants should bring their reenforcements about his ears too thick and fast. At all events, it was the only chance.

But Thorleif the Wise proposed a stratagem, in accordance with which, as soon as the darkest hour of the night drew near, every man's armor was taken from him and all put on short cloaks, such as the peasants wore at night in that season. The warriors retained only their weapons; even helmets, the gleam of which might betray them, were left behind. Then all were lined up in the garth, too near which the peasants did not dare approach, for, having few bows themselves, they feared the shafts of the housecarls.

Stealthily the gate was opened just enough to let through one man at a time, and one by one, at intervals sufficient to allow the man ahead to creep between the fires and their guardians, the housecarls made for the river. It was their plan, if any challenged them, to pass themselves off for peasants, but not under any condition to approach too near the fire, lest their faces betray them.

The scheme worked perfectly. One by one, the housecarls slipped out. Many times they were challenged; but their entire lack of armor and their apparent confidence made them seem what they pretended to be. Hakon's chiefs were careful not to let too many men in succession make for the same point in the peasants' lines and after nearly two anxious hours they were through the fires.

Then came the most trying time of all, for they had to slip into the river Nid and swim quietly across, without betraying themselves to the vigilant ears and eyes that surrounded them. Fortune favored them, for with the progress of the night the peasants let the fires die down somewhat, and the darkness gathered closer about them. The river was shallow and not wide; once on the farther side, except where the road wound through borders of meadow and field, the wood offered them its grateful shelter. The very love of life imposing caution on them, they succeeded in crossing the river without being discovered.

Luckily for them the angry hosts about them were least expectant of a sortie on this side; for all were sure that Hakon would seek to issue on the east, whence he could dash for Halogaland. Olaf's victory had seemed to make this the more certain, since the peasants, themselves so triumphant over the disaster to Erlend's fleet, never stopped to realize that Hakon did not know of it.

But the peril was not yet over. As his dripping men-at-arms wandered through the wood, from time to time the voices of new bands of peasants, just coming up from back-country, startled them into taking cover. Twice their enemies passed fairly among them through the dark forest. But at last, toward dawn they came to the Gaul, forded it and found themselves in the protection of the denser Orkdale forest.

Wet, weary, hungry, they would have been utterly discouraged but for their certainty that Erlend's fleet offered them entire safety once they could reach the mouth of the fiord. But to do this, they must still march for over forty miles, across rivers, through fields and forests, around deep indentations of the fiord that would cost them much precious time. They were still ignorant of the extent of the rebellion; for indeed its vast sweep had been made possible only by the landing of Olaf, of which they were not sure.

But they were somewhat enlightened a few hours after dawn, when, marching swiftly, but with all care, the scouts sent out ahead reported a large body of peasants encamped about the little forest settlement of

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Haugsby. In consternation, Hakon ordered them to turn north at once, out of the way of this peril, and in the quiet thickness of the wood they crept stealthily from sight.

BUT HAKON JARL, whose valor had always hitherto been equal to the most terrible emergency, whose cunning had snatched victory from disaster more times than men could remember, was shaken by this last danger. His religion taught that every man's destiny was irrevocably fixed by the dark power of the Norns, the goddesses of man's fate; his superstition, which had always buoyed him up with the conviction that these powers were with him, now convinced him that the Norns had turned against him.

The memory of the oath which he had sworn by the terrible Thorgerd Holgabrud and then broken, rose from the past to torment him, till he was sure that the peasants, and even Olaf, were instruments in the hands of the angry powers to crush him. Often, as he hastened on, he groaned in abject fear; his pale face showed the foreboding of death. At last he could endure no more and called his chiefs together.

"We shall never win through thus," he said in a voice that shook with fright. "Who knows when we shall come upon more of them? It seems that all Norway is in arms against me; the gods have abandoned me!

"It is I whom they seek, my life they would spill. They have no grudge against any of you, save perhaps against Gudbrand."

Gudbrand the White looked piteously at his master. It was true that he had been too apt a tool of the earl's to escape the vengeance of the angry people if they laid their hands upon him. But it was also true that the rest of the earl's men might hope for safety if they abandoned him.

"There is but one escape for us all," Hakon continued. "We must separate. Each of you go his way, wherever the wood is free of the peasants. I, too, will go my way, alone."

Thorleif the Wise protested—

"Not without one sword to guard your head, my lord."

"Aye, without one, save my own. Kark I will take with me, for he and I were born on the same day, and it is in my heart that somehow death also will find us together. But do ye scatter quickly, and go each man where luck leads him."

They all recognized the wisdom of the thought. Together, they were too few for defense, but too many to escape notice much longer. Singly, they might well get away entirely; and if they did not there was a chance that the peasants would actually kill none but Hakon and possibly Gudbrand or Kark. So, winged with fear, they scattered among the trees, each going as he would.

Alone together, Hakon and Kark looked into each other's faces, and each read what lay written on his own. Terror, abject and pitiful, whitened the lips of each. The slave, usually cowardly, now seemed the bolder of the two.

"If we are seen, master, will you strike a blow for poor Kark?" he asked. "Or will you flee and leave him?"

"If we are seen, we perish together," the earl answered. "For the gods have so knit our lives together that we shall not die far apart. But let us be off, for it is a long way north along the fiord, and Erlend is waiting. Ah, I shall not breathe till I set eyes upon his ships!"

With a warning hiss Kark laid hold of the earl's arm and drew him into the depths of a thicket. There were briars there, which pierced through their cloaks and wounded their flesh; but they lay close, hugging the very vines that wounded them. Faint at first, then louder and louder, came the sound of a horse's hoofs. It was near at hand, for the forest mold muffled the beating hoofs too well for them to be heard at a distance.

Now the noise was fairly upon them, and it was plain that the rider was alone. Peering out cautiously, Hakon saw, recognized the horseman, and his heart leaped in his breast. Here was one who might indeed be an enemy, but who was surely a noble, generous enemy, who might forgive and would surely not betray. He plunged out of the thicket, so close to the horse that the rider had to rein with all his strength to keep from knocking him down. His face scratched with briars till blood coursed down his cheeks and trickled into that beard of which he had been so proud, his eyes wild with fear and hope, Hakon cried:

"Einar! Einar Thumb-shaker!"

"Hakon Jarl!"

Small wonder that Einar was astonished. Though he knew Hakon must be somewhere—

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in this very Orkdale forest, though he realized the earl was a fugitive, in imminent peril of death, the condition in which he actually found him staggered the young man. The mighty soldier, the conqueror of kings, whom he had last seen in the insolence of his strength, tyrant and master of Norway—now alone, save for a wretched thrall, friendless, forlorn and in tatters!

The spectacle of fallen greatness is always pitiful, doubly so in the eyes of a young man, who gazes on the outlawed wreck of that which he once called lord! Einar's heaped-up wrath against the earl almost melted in his breast at the sight. Dismounting, he asked kindly—

"What would you, Hakon Jarl?"

"Save me!" the earl cried, in his fear descending to plead with the man who had served him. "Save me! The peasants are all about me! Help me to reach Adganess, where my son awaits me with his ships!"

Einar shook his head in genuine sorrow.

"It is too late," he answered. "Erlend lives no more."

Hakon reeled back against the arm of Kark, his face livid.

"My son!" he gasped. "My son! Dead?"

Then, after a moment's pause, he asked in a shaking voice—

"Was it—Olaf?"

"Olaf. Yesterday at noon the battle was decided."

"Oh, my son, my son!" mourned Hakon, suddenly old in his grief and ill-hap. "But Sveinn?" he asked. "Does he live, or has he too fallen in the wo that has overtaken my house?"

"Sveinn?" Einar echoed. "Sveinn the Black? I knew not that he was with his brother."

"Sveinn commanded the *Sea-mew* under Erlend."

"Few could have escaped. Aslak of Saltness saw your ships hard-pressed and giving way; Olaf was between them and the open sea, and if they had fled they must have passed by Ladir before dusk last night."

Stupefied with the shock of his loss and the destruction of his last hope, the earl leaned heavily on his slave's shoulder. But Kark, fearful for his own life, shook him roughly.

"Come, master!" he urged. "Though the gods have smitten you sore, it may yet be their will to save your skin. Away, while there is yet time!"

"Away?" groaned Hakon. "Whither?"

"South, of course. The peasants beset every other way, and soon that too will be closed, unless you make haste. Beyond Skerdingstad are the mountains, where you may hide safely for as long as you will; there is good friendly forest all the way."

But Einar intervened.

"Hakon Jarl, if you will hear me, I will give you good counsel," he offered. "The mountain-folk are already out against you; you may meet whole armies of the peasants between here and Skerdingstad, and even then you will not be safe. You know the hatred of the country-folk: if they lay hands on you, they will tear you limb from limb. Your best chance lies in coming with me to Olaf Tryggvason. He is generous and may spare you."

BUT at the mention of Olaf Hakon was again seized with panic. He shut his eyes, and thrust out his hands as if to thrust away some image of horror.

"Never!" he shuddered. "Olaf hates me more than any other man! He will give me to the torments!"

"Olaf's heart is merciful," the young man urged. "He punishes none with death, save them who reject Christ. It is true he hates you, but——"

He got no further, for suddenly he remembered that Hakon himself had rejected Christ; for, having professed Christianity in the days of Eric Blood-ax, the earl had returned to the old gods and had persecuted the new faith till it perished from the land. Hakon's frenzied terror showed that he too thought of these things.

"Never will I go to Olaf!" he repeated. "Rather let the peasants hack me in pieces! Rather let me be gnawed by serpents in the nether hell!"

Nor was he more wretched in his fear than Kark, who quivered in every limb.

Einar was nonplussed. It had been his hope, now that he had found the earl, to persuade him to yield. Then he would have taken Hakon to Gimsar and lodged him in hiding with Styrkar, whom the peasants trusted, till Olaf appeared. But it was true that, though Olaf might forgive the man who had driven him and his mother into exile and slavery, he would never pardon him who had destroyed the Christian faith and reared up again the altars of Odin. After a

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moment's thought he realized that there was nothing he could do. Accordingly he mounted and was on the point of riding off. But Hakon, in sheer despair, clutched at his bridle.

"Give me thy horse, good Einar!" he wheedled. "Its speed may save my life. Have I not been a good lord to you? Look on the splendid sword at your side. I gave it you, do you remember? Help me now, help me to escape from them that seek my blood! Give me thy horse!"

But Einar's pity was fast oozing away before the disgust that rose within him at the man's cowardice. Was this the great conqueror, the dashing hero, before whose valor three kingdoms had once trembled? Was this the way Hakon the Mighty faced death? He shook his head and would have turned away, but in that moment there came a sudden snapping of twigs, the sound of flying feet. Before one of the three could stir, a young man leaped out of the wood before them, his black hair disheveled and dirty, his slashed mail bloody.

"Sveinn!" gasped the earl. "Sveinn!! My son!"

"Aye," the new-comer panted, his hand to his aching side. "Your ships are taken, father, your men cut to ribbons. Erlend—is dead. I alone escaped."

The return of this one child from the death which had seemed certain roused Hakon's crushed spirit. The color came slowly back to his face; his eyes assumed some of their ancient pride.

"Ah, if Eric but knew!" he cried. "It would go ill with my foes this day if he were here with his sturdy housecarles!"

Sveinn, somewhat recovered from his exhaustion, laughed grimly.

"He is not here, nor will he come in time. There are but two ways open to us, father: flight and death. It is a good thing Einar is with us, for he wields a strong bow, which we can use at a pinch. Ha, Einar! You will stand by us, will you not?"

Einar shook his head.

"I am Olaf's man," he said.

Sveinn's face was convulsed with wrath, but his anger was as nothing to that of Hakon, who now heard for the first time of Einar's change of allegiance. With a howl of rage he drew his sword and flung himself upon the archer. But Einar's horse had seen the fierce surge of battle before and backed swiftly before the upraised steel. Before the earl could strike, Einar slipped from the saddle and the blow cut the air.

Hakon struck again; but his adversary leaped to one side and then sprang in, closed with him and, raising the earl from his feet, held him as a shield between himself and the sword of Sveinn. For a moment Sveinn circled about him, poised for a thrust; but Einar followed his every move, presenting Hakon's body to the steel, and Sveinn dared not strike.

Suddenly a shadow fell across the forest-floor in front of the archer and a gleam of triumph flashed in Sveinn's eyes. Sensing treachery, Einar hurled the earl full against Sveinn's breast. The prince's point was lowered in time, but father and son hurtled headlong to the ground together. As he flung Hakon from him, Einar turned swiftly, to face the downward flash of Kark's knife. The blade ripped his half-coat, but he twisted away in time to avoid taking it in the flesh. Instantly he struck, and Kark went down flatlong beneath his fist.

Sveinn was up again and ran upon him with circling blade. For a little Einar retreated before it, unwilling to draw sword on the brother of Bergliot; but there was no help for it. Sveinn was a famous swordsman and fought coolly. There could be no running-in beneath his guard. Groaning in spirit, Einar swept out his own weapon, the earl's gift, and closed with his enemy.

Now Einar had indeed occasion to bless the stern training of his grandfather, who in his day had known no master with the sword. Sveinn fought with steadiness and brilliance, and his cold eyes showed there was no mercy in him. The two were well-matched, for, though Einar was far the stronger and fully as quick, Sveinn's skill was seasoned by his experience in many battles and single combats. The sword was his weapon; though Einar was well-versed in fence, his weapon was the bow.

When his blade met Sveinn's, his great strength drove the prince's sword before it as a ship's prow drives the spray; but always Sveinn recovered and flashed in blow for blow. Soon both were breathing heavily, but Sveinn's breast labored and heaved with the sheer toil of it, for the weariness of his long flight from Agdaness still burdened him, and his enemy's weight was beginning to tell.

Suddenly Einar's eyes were dazzled by a

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blaze of light, and he leaped back. His opponent's point whizzed past his face, slashed his coat from shoulder to waist and swiftly recovered, darted for his throat. But Einar's guard was up again. Striking the dangerous thrust aside, he leaped in and smote down with all his force. The heavy blade met something solid, with a sound at once thick and metallic. Swaying, the prince cried out in agony and slumped to the ground. Blood spurted in waves from his right shoulder just where the steel rings of his mail ended and the flesh showed white.

EINAR'S heart was sick with the thought of that which he had done. It was a fair fight and had been forced upon him; but would that make Bergliot's grief the lighter? Regardless of Hakon or of Kark, he gazed down upon the dying man with tears in his eyes and sorrow weighing heavily upon him. He must go to her now, and tell her what he had done. In little Erling's death he had been guiltless. Now his hands were red with her brother's blood, and that blood was a stream wide and deep enough to separate them forever. How could Bergliot give her love to her brother's murderer?

Sveinn's eye-lids, leaden with the heaviness of death, forced themselves apart, and his lusterless gaze rested on his father. Hakon was up now, dumbly staring at the grim scene before him. Kark was rising, propped on one knee.

The wounded man strove to speak. Twice the words choked in his throat; the third time, a last access of strength drove them forth in a bubbling cry:

"Flee! Olaf has taken land and rides—south!"

On the last word he choked again and fell back, blood gushing from his stiffening lips.

The dreaded name galvanized Hakon into instant action. While Einar gazed on that which had been Sveinn the Black, the earl ran swiftly to the horse, leaped upon it and drove home the spurs. The animal reared, plunged and dashed forward. As it bounded past him Kark caught one stirrup and with all his great strength heaved himself up behind the earl.

Einar turned to see them rushing by. Fleet of foot as he knew himself to be, he could have overtaken them easily, for the horse had galloped far already and now carried double.

"What avails it?" he muttered. "My hands are red with his son's blood; it were ill done to seek his also. Bergliot's score against me is all too heavy now."

With the sword that had cut Sveinn down he dug the prince's grave and buried him with all honor. In the grave he laid the dead man's weapons by him; the brooch from his shoulder he placed on the breast of the corpse; then, detaching his own scabbard from the golden belt Skopti had given him, he sheathed the bloody sword and laid it also, the rare and beautiful gift, in the tomb.

"Thus," he said aloud, as if to the slain, "I give back to Hakon's house all that I received from them—my sword, my joy, my love."

And with a sore heart he rose, to perform that which he would have given his life to avoid: to bring to Bergliot the tidings that her brother had fallen by his hand. Slowly he walked through the forest, no longer anxious to find Olaf, his face turned sadly toward Rimul, seven miles to the southeastward. As he walked, his thoughts were busy with his sorrow, and with the sorrow that he must bring to her whom he loved.

But all at once he stopped, realizing a strange thing. The dead man had said that Olaf was riding south from Adganess; that would bring him across the Ork, which ran almost parallel with the Gaul, and would take him farther, to the Gaul itself. If Olaf kept on into the Orkdale forest, he must pass near Skerdingstad, not two miles south of Rimul, whither Einar himself was bound.

"But Hakon," he exclaimed, "but Hakon rode toward the Gaul!"

Yes, Hakon had ridden southeast from where they had met in the forest. Sooner or later, unless he stopped, or unless Olaf marched with incredible slowness, their paths would meet, and Hakon would never live to reach the precarious shelter of the mountains!

Yet there was nothing else for Hakon to do. He was penned in between the closing jaws of a monstrous trap; one jaw, the army of Olaf on the west; the other, the peasant armies on the east. If he reached the mountains before those jaws met, there were other bands of peasants in the hills; if he faltered or turned back, the inexorable trap would close and crush out his life. Either way, the rule of Hakon was ended. He who

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had been the mightiest of the mighty was now a hunted exile, playing a losing game at hide-and-seek with death.

Then other thoughts, vivid and terrible, rushed into Einar's troubled mind. Suppose Olaf's march should bring him to Rimul? Olaf himself was good and kind and could certainly maintain discipline; but what if his warriors, searching for Hakon, found Bergliot? Christian or heathen, housecarls were much the same, and the women of the conquered are the prize of war.

Horror flooding his heart, Einar began to run. With all the strength of his fleet young legs, with all the driving energy of fear, he sped through the dark forest toward Rimul, praying to reach the house in the wood ahead of the scouts of Olaf.

CHAPTER XVI

THE STY OF RIMUL

THE passing days grew heavier and darker with fear for the women at Rimul. Thrice by day, and once during the night, they heard from far-off the cries of the Thrandheim peasants searching for Hakon; and, though they guessed not all that had happened, they knew it boded no good for the earl. Olaf was coming; this much they knew, though none had come near to tell them of the fight at Agdaness; and the shouting of the search-parties told them that Hakon was either hard-pressed at Ladir or already in flight.

Fear for her father struggled in Bergliot's heart with anxiety for Einar, of whom she had had no news since he had ridden off so hurriedly two days before. She had no doubt of his safety among the peasants, for had he not both defied them and won them to him by his defense of her at Gimsar? But if he fell into the hands of Hakon he would pay dearly for his bold interference in behalf of Gudrun.

Evening came, gloomy with the chill darkness of approaching Winter, gloomier still with the sinister threat of evil. One of the old women lighted a warm fire in the hearth-pit. Thora prepared their meal and set it on a table close to the fire. Silently they sat down, sadness blunting their appetites. Bergliot sat with her back to the door, shivering slightly in the cold draft that penetrated through the chinks; Thora faced her across the board. The serving-women went out to the stable to attend to the cattle.

Slowly, noiselessly, the latch lifted; but Thora, immersed in her own sad thoughts, did not notice. A gust of cold night air blew in and Bergliot shivered again. The table-cover lifted in the breeze. Thora rose, saying—

"The door——"

She broke off, leaning heavily against her chair. Her eyes were fixed on the open door, her lips were white and parted. Startled, Bergliot left her chair; but a voice, a hoarse whisper, stopped her where she stood.

"Thora of Rimul! Thora! Hide me! Save me!"

It was the voice of a man far gone in fear, of a man whose courage had turned to water and oozed from his despairing heart. The voice of Hakon!

With a choking cry Thora flung herself upon the breast of the man who had deserted her. Gone was all thought of her own grief, all memory of the shame and insults she had endured from him—blotted out suddenly in self-forgetful grief for him. At once she read in his outcry all that had passed: that he was a hunted man, surrounded by foes thirsting for his blood. Her arms about him, she drew him to her as if her bosom could protect him from hostile spears, from the anger of God and man. His cheeks were wet with her tears.

Though he had spurned her from him in the pride of his greatness, in the hour of defeat and shame he had come to her. Stroking his pale face with tender fingers, she strove to comfort him, pouring out upon him the wealth of her love.

Bergliot turned now and faced her father, as white as he, but strong and calm. Laying her hands on Thora's arms, she drew them gently away.

"There may be no time to lose," she urged. "Give him food and find a place where he may hide."

Hakon stared at her as if she had been a ghost.

"Bergliot!" he muttered.

Holding his gaze in hers, his daughter saw the panic in his eyes slip slowly from him before the brave dignity of her face. He reached out one hand, almost timidly, and stroked her hair. Then, his voice steadier, he whispered:

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"Bergliot! My child!"

Gently she led him to the bench, made him sit down, and set food and ale before him. He fell upon the victual like a starved wolf; but after a few gulps he paused and said—

"Kark is without; he is hungry too."

Bergliot went to the door, called softly, and the slave slipped from the shadows like a frightened cat, closing the door swiftly and silently behind him. The fugitives ate rapidly, as men who know that death steals upon them with impatient strides, and soon had finished. Then Hakon rose, but with a shadow of his old-time courage and resolution.

"We fled by night from Ladir," he explained hurriedly, "the peasants encompassing us round about. Erlend is dead, so we came hither; for, O Thora, thou who hast endured bitter wrong at my hands, there is none save thee in all this land who heeds whether Hakon dies! None save thee—unless it be this child of mine—who does not hunt me toward my opening grave! If the road had been clear, I would have gone on to the hills; but two miles beyond here we came upon the glow of many fires, heard the clink of mail and the cries of the watchers! It is the camp of Olaf, my ancient enemy, the enemy of my gods!"

Excitement mastering him, he broke off and suddenly cried out:

"Thora! By our old, dear love, hide me! The sword is at my throat!"

Steadied by the calm eyes of Bergliot, Thora took his hand and led him through the kitchen, out into the garth. Kark followed at once, like a dog terrified by its master's fear, and Bergliot came last with a torch. Behind the stables, sixty yards or more from the house, stertorous breathing and a rank stench rose from a large pigsty by a great, flat-topped rock. Here Thora stopped and spoke in a voice half-inaudible with strangling sobs:

"They will surely hunt thee here about my house, both within and without, for my love for thee is known to all folk. But there is one place even here where none will think to look for such a man as thou, and this is the place."

She pointed to the sty.

"Life before honor," Hakon answered dully. "Let us make it ready swiftly."

Taking the torch, Thora went to an outhouse and returned with two spades. Seizing them, Hakon and Kark stepped in among the swine, which started from under their tramping feet with grunts and squeals of protest. While Thora held the light, they flung aside the muck of the pen, and dug a deep hole large enough for two men to crouch in. As they dug, Bergliot disappeared into the dark and came back bearing an armful of planks. Thrice more she went, till there was enough wood to cover the hole.

The men crept in; but as his shoulders sank beneath the excavation Hakon looked back once, his eyes seeking Thora's. Kark followed, trembling in an agony of fright. Quickly the two women placed the planks over the hole, leaving only a narrow crack for air, and swept the muck back over the boards. The sleepy swine returned to their filthy beds.

The women returned to the house and extinguished the lights. But neither went to bed. Bergliot's strong soul struggled with her sorrow for dead Erlend and her doomed father; Thora's heart was with the earl. Side by side the two sat near the dying fire, cold, weary, and anxious.

IN THE choking foulness of their hiding-place Hakon, despite his exhaustion, slept but fitfully. His dreams were wild and broken; again and again he started from slumber with a hoarse outcry, only to fall into drowsiness again as sleep mastered the terror of the visions which oppressed him. Kark slept steadily, but his dreams, too, were filled with fear; for he muttered much, and tossed from side to side. In his waking moments Hakon listened to the slave's disturbed breathing and disjointed speech; and a new terror entered his heart. He thrust out his hand in the thick, filthy dark and shook the thrall savagely. Kark started up with a muffled exclamation.

"What dost thou dream?" asked the earl; yet he feared to hear the reply.

"I dreamed," Kark muttered, "that I was at Ladir and Olaf laid a gold ring round my neck."

Hakon's heart turned cold, but he answered grimly:

"The only ring thou wilt get from Olaf will be a circle of red, with crimson pendants that drop and stain thy breast. I have been a good master to thee and will be

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still, if I get away from this place alive. Do not think to betray me, for I tell thee that thou and I, who have lived together from birth, shall die not far apart."

Kark replied not, for he slept.

MORNING came and both awoke. The air in the hole was thick and evil, half-choking them. Through the tiny breathing-space filtered a thin gleam of light.

"Like the edge of a knife," thought Hakon and shuddered.

They crouched close together in their fear, warm in that foul place by the heat of their own bodies, sweating with warmth and with apprehension.

Hakon suddenly drew himself up, heedless of his stiff and aching muscles. Beneath the boards and the muck, beneath the swine that grunted and rooted over their heads, there penetrated the sounds of many voices, the muffled tramping of men, the ringing clatter of mail. Kark drew a gasping breath and cowered closer to his master.

THEIR eyes full of the dread which was in their hearts, Thora and Bergliot went about the morning's tasks, neither in the mood for speaking. The thoughts of both were the same, yet neither dared to carry food to the men who lay hidden beneath the sty, lest the host of Olaf suddenly appear about the house and find them in the act. So they ate, cleared the table and swept the house as usual, in terror of that which they knew would happen at almost any moment.

Then it came, with the same heart-piercing suddenness which they feared. First a distant shout; then the tramping of numberless feet, the rattling of armor, and voices. Behind the closed door the women gazed at each other's colorless faces. The feet and voices came closer, closer, till the tumult seemed to burst upon them and overwhelm them. Then, as if tearing aside the curtain which hid their hearts, sounded a loud, rough voice, fierce with hate:

"This is the place, O king! Here alone in all Norway dwells one whose roof Hakon would dare seek. If you find him not here, then he is dead; for Thora of Rimul loves him, and if he lives he has come to her!"

A clear, cheerful voice answered:

"Thou hast done well, Ulf. If we find him, I will heap thy house with riches. Surround the garth!"

The tinkling of armor ran all about the house. Feet crunched on the gravel path, pounded on the step; the door was flung wide.

The light that flooded in shone full on Thora's weary face. Bergliot stood farther back, in the deeper shadows of the room. A huge man-at-arms, fierce-eyed and mustached, blocked the doorway.

"Ha, woman!" he greeted her rudely. "Where is Hakon Jarl?"

Thora's head was high.

"I know not," she lied bravely. "Seek him at Ladir, in his royal hall!"

The warrior laughed mockingly and entered; several of his fellows strode in at his heels. Without another word to the women they set about methodically searching the house, tugging aside the heavy carven wardrobes, cabinets and chairs, peering behind hangings and under benches, passing from hall to kitchen and back. Their eyes roved everywhere.

Shouts and curses from the garth told that the search was going on in the stables and out-houses and was not succeeding. More men poured into the hall, their faces baffled and angry. They were all strangers, most of them foreigners, their Norwegian tinged with the rich accents of Ireland or the broad brogue of Northumbria. At length he who had first come in confronted Thora angrily, demanding—

"Tell me where thou hast hidden him, thou wench of the devil, or I will send thee howling to hell!"

Thora looked at him with contemptuous fearlessness. Death was nothing to her, if she might save him who lurked without beneath the muck of the swine-pen, him whose love had long been all she craved of life.

"He is not here," she repeated. "He has nothing to do with me. I dwell here alone, apart from men."

The soldier grasped her arm and twisted it till tears of pain glistened in her eyes, but she kept silence. Just then a second warrior entered, a tall, personable man with a self-satisfied face. His fine armor and the giltwork on his helmet proclaimed him an officer.

"What folly is this, Steinn?" he chided. "Harm her not. She is too fair for such

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rough hands as thine. See, pretty one, here is a ring of gold for thee if thou wilt tell where the earl skulks! No? Then thou wilt take the ring and give me a kiss?"

His arm went about her; but in that moment he saw Bergliot and cried:

"Here is a sweeter bird, who will know better how to value a tall fellow! Give me a kiss, little starling!"

Bergliot drew back, and as he pressed closer she suddenly smote him between the eyes with her open palm and ran toward the kitchen. But at its very door she was flung back by a grinning housecarl, and before she could regain her balance the officer seized her in both arms, one hand against the back of her head. She struggled with all her strength, but the pitiless hand forced her face closer and closer to his. She struck out at the mocking lips and shrieked loudly.

Straight upon the sound, an answering cry came from the garth and a tall, well-formed man in gilded armor burst into the room. His curtained helmet was encircled by a thin band of gold; his strong features were glowing with anger. As he leaped over the threshold, Bergliot's persecutor loosed his clasp and turned to face the newcomer with terror in his eyes. Striding over to him, the angry man cried:

"Thou dog! Did I not order that no woman in this land should be harmed?"

"It is true, O king," the man stammered. "But these women would not tell where they have hidden him——"

With no word further, Olaf stripped the glove from his hand, raised his clenched fist and knocked the officer down. Then, picking him up bodily, he hurled him through the doorway and dusted his hands. Turning to Bergliot, he said gently:

"Hold not that fool's misconduct against me, Lady Thora. You have nothing to fear henceforth, whether you have hidden my enemy or not."

"I am not Thora," the girl answered. "Yonder is Thora, whom your man sorely mistreated."

"He shall pay for it," Olaf assured her. "And now fear not: no ill can happen to you."

There was no hint of gallantry in his voice, nothing but grave, courteous concern. As Bergliot thanked him, he bowed to both women and went out.

For more than an hour the hum of voices and the noise of the search went on about them, now broken by impatient outcries, now sinking again to an intermittent monotone. At length Olaf called out:

"He is not here, else we should have found him long since. Let us on!"

But his last words were drowned in a tremendous roar from a multitude of throats. Hastening to the door, Bergliot barely choked a cry and staggered back. Out from the wood filed a triumphant party of housecarls, leading a saddled horse.

"We have found his steed!" the officer in charge reported. "He will not be far to seek, I think."

"That is not his horse!" cried a heavy voice that Bergliot recognized as Bergthor's. "It is Einar Thumb-shaker's!"

"Ha!" said Olaf. "But we have been here over an hour and have found no trace of Einar about. Nor do I think he would hide from me. He has a tender conscience, that boy, and it may be that he felt it his duty to lend Hakon his horse. Search further, lads!"

And the king himself led the way, to encourage the man-hunters. As chance would have it, his feet led him to the rock hard by the sty; and his men, obeying the natural instinct to herd with their leader, followed him, till the greater part of them were close about him. Idly Olaf mounted the rock, and then, to stimulate the search, he cried:

"See! I will give this gold band on my arm to him who brings me Hakon's head!"

Hearing, Thora shrieked and sank sobbing upon a bench. But Bergliot, pale to the eyes, ran out into the garth, broke through the ring of men as they scattered eagerly to renew the hunt, and fell at Olaf's feet.

"Ah, my lord!" she implored. "Spare him! Forgive! You worship the white Christ, who is merciful! In His name I pray you spare my father!"

"Thy father!" Olaf cried. "Art thou Hakon's daughter?"

She nodded sadly. Olaf sprang from the rock and took her hand in his.

"Dost thou too believe in Christ?"

"I was born to the faith of the old gods," Bergliot answered. "But I have heard one who has seen thee say that the gentleness in thy heart proceeded from thy God, and I think the true God may be known by the hearts of His worshipers."

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For a long moment Olaf Tryggvason looked into the heathen girl's eyes. Then:

"Once an old peasant, and now a maiden of the pagans has taught me the will of my Master," he said, with strange humility.

Raising his voice, he called to his warriors to bring Hakon to him alive and unharmed. Then, with infinite gentleness, he told Bergliot the story of that old time when he, a babe in arms, and his tender mother were hunted, almost to the death, by Hakon; he told, too, of his vow of vengeance when, all too soon before his mother and he were forever separated, she had disclosed to him his birth and the long persecution they had suffered. But Olaf said nothing to Bergliot of Hakon's vile words as the earl's horsemen had ridden past their hiding-place among the reeds; for this was Hakon's daughter, and he feared to hurt her.

"And so," he concluded, "ever since, I have longed for the day that would bring Hakon into my hand, that I might deal with him in such a way as to make full payment for my mother's wrongs. I have striven to forgive my enemies, but my hate for Hakon was too strong for me. Always have I dreamed of the joy his blood would bring me. But now the command of Christ: 'Forgive your enemies,' has come home to my heart through thy lips; and if he is found, I will forgive him."

Bergliot listened in wonder. She had not dared hope that Olaf would listen to her prayer. And in her heart there dawned the certainty that Christ, who bade men forgive their enemies, must be a God of love; that He would have saved little Erling's life, had her father believed in Him. With that thought tears rushed to her eyes, her soul was lifted up, and she said softly:

"From thy heart speaks Christ Himself. Surely He is God, and the old gods are dead. I believe in Him, for He is good."

The sound of voices rose again. A number of housecarls ran toward the front of the house with lifted spears; but the assembled peasants crowded in their way and the voice of Orm Lyrgia cried:

"Harm him not, men of Olaf! He is Einar Thumb-shaker, and the king's man!"

It was Einar indeed, weary and haggard, spent with the fasting and toil of nearly two days in the forest without food or rest. From the moment when the thought had first come to him that Olaf's men might not observe their master's kindness toward the weak, that Bergliot might be in danger, he had stopped neither to eat nor sleep, but had run on, in desperate haste, through the forest. Twice he had been stopped by bands of peasants from the south, who knew him not, and had been forced to give an account of himself.

He pushed through the peasants without so much as a greeting, passed the king's housecarls as if they were not, and was about to ascend the steps of the house when Olaf avanced to meet him.

"Hail, Thumb-shaker!" the king cried merrily. "The sight of thee gladdens my eyes. But thou art spent, man, and hungry! Thy eyes glare like a wolf's. Vilmund! Fetch food and drink from the house!"

But Einar, thinking not of food, knelt before the king and cried:

"Hail, King Olaf! Is it well with Bergliot?"

"Bergliot? Ah, the earl's daughter! Aye, she is well, lad, and has accepted Christ!"

Scarce were the words out of his mouth when Bergliot came round the angle of the house, her eyes alight with the joy of her love, of Olaf's promise, and of her new-found faith. Einar passed the king as if he had been a tree-stump, and took her in his arms. His mouth twitching, Olaf turned away and left them to themselves.

But there was one whose ears had overheard the offer of a golden bracelet to him who brought Hakon's head; and who, being oppressed with weariness and foul air, had thereupon slept and dreamed evil dreams, so that he heard not the later command to spare the earl.

CHAPTER XVII

THE WHITE CHRIST TRIUMPHS

EINAR'S first relief at finding Bergliot safe, and her joy at his return, for a moment drove from his mind all thought of the blood which flowed between them. But even as she clung to him, the grim memory of that fierce fight in the wood surged back upon him. Gently he put her from him, for that which he had to tell must separate them forever. Reading the bitterness in his eyes, Bergliot felt that he

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was suffering; but with fine understanding she did not seek to know his trouble till he should tell it in his own way.

But it was not easy to tell. For some minutes he looked at her with an expression of such piteous longing that his sorrow communicated itself to her. Then at last he spoke, sadly, fumbling a little for words:

"Ah, thou art beautiful! Thou art lovely and gracious beyond all other women that have been, and I have lost thee!"

"Thou hast never lost me, either in this life or in that beyond," she answered; but he went on:

"A river of blood sunders us, which we can not pass. God knows it saddens my heart to bring wo upon thee, but I can not help it. Thy brother Sveinn attacked me in the wood, and I slew him. Oh, why didst thou love me so much, or why was I born to hurt thy gentle spirit?"

Involuntarily Bergliot drew back from him, her eyes wide with horror. She said no word, and Einar, reading in her silence the death-sentence to his hopes, smiled wanly.

"It was fair fight," he said, "but his blood is red upon my hands. There can be no love in thy heart for him who slew thy brother; no water will wash that stain away, no tears can dissolve it, nor remove it from between us."

Grief-stricken, she was still silent; but a rich, deep voice behind him answered in tones of kindly, authoritative assurance:

"So long as thy hands are clean of treachery, no blood can stain them; nor is there any stain so red that the tears of Christ can not wash it away. Cast your sorrows on Him, my children. He came to bear the woes of men, and to share the burden of their sins."

It was Eanmund, Olaf's chaplain, a tall, bent old man, with shaven face and tonsured head. His thin features seemed to glow with a reflection of the divine love, of the divine forgiveness. Bergliot raised her eyes to his, and slowly, the horror, the extremity of her grief, seemed to dissolve from her.

Eanmund enfolded Einar's hands in his and led him to her.

"Does thy heart incline toward this man?" he asked. "Dost thou forgive him thy brother's death, which he caused innocently, in self-defense?"

Such words had never before come to Bergliot's ears, or to Einar's. Their ancient belief taught, through law as well as through the grim religion of Odin, that it was the first duty of every human soul to hate the murderer of a kinsman, to make no truce with him, to pursue him with vengeance, till he paid the fine allotted by law or gave his own life instead. The shadow of Odin stood now between Bergliot and her lover, forbidding their love, crying out for vengeance. But the dark shadow trembled and fled before the light of Christ in the priest's exalted face.

"I love him, and I forgive him," Bergliot answered.

"Then there is no barrier between you, for God is love, and commands His children to love one another."

The bitterness in Einar's features yielded to doubt, the doubt to joy. Falling at Bergliot's feet, he seized her hands and kissed them. Swiftly she bent forward and kissed him on the lips. The priest watched them for a moment, then—

"Do ye believe, my children?" he asked; and with one voice they answered:

"We believe."

Then the priest knelt down beside them and raised his hands to heaven.

"Father, I thank Thee!" he prayed. "I thank Thee, Who hast brought two souls to the faith of Thy Son, not through fear or the prudence of little hearts, but through true forgiveness and love!"

NAS OLAF, standing by the rock which overshadowed the sty, gave command that the earl be spared, and promised Bergliot that his enemy should be forgiven, Hakon heard and felt the weight of terror roll from him. He wiped his hot brow, rejoicing greatly, for all other emotions were swallowed up by the love of life. He was not to die, then! Olaf would not slay him! He was to live!

"Kark, didst thou hear?" he muttered to his companion; but Kark slept, and his evil dreams still plagued him.

The earl laid a hand on his shoulder but, changing his mind, he resolved to wait till the slave awoke and then command his aid in removing the boards that shut them out from light and freedom. His soul, delivered from its torture, gloried in the realization of release. He waited, therefore, for the slave to stir, hugging to himself the precious hope of life.

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But the deadly air of that filthy hole weighted his eyelids; he nodded and fell again into slumber. Hardly had he dozed off when Kark woke suddenly, his sleep-charged mind still repeating the words of his dream:

"A gold ring round my neck! Riches and honor to him who brings the head of Hakon!"

The single ray of light that filtered through the tiny breathing-space now shone full on the neck and head of Hakon, making them stand out from the dark as if floating separate from the body. The slave's eyes glowed evilly.

"Riches!" he muttered. "Riches, for a stroke of the knife!"

Suddenly the earl shuddered in his sleep and drew up both feet in some strange spasm of slumber. His overwrought nerves twitching, Kark gave a strangled scream and leaped forward. A gleam of steel flashed in the tiny sunbeam; something wet and sticky flooded the hands of the thrall; and, shrieking once horribly, the great earl perished.

OLAF sat in the hall of Thora's house, his merry face alight with a radiant of joy. Before him stood Bergliot and Einar, hand in hand.

"Were Hakon brought before me now," the king laughed, "I think his pleasure would be as great as mine. Though he loves you little, Einar, yet full pardon for his deeds might make him look upon you more kindly. And when all is said, it was your horse saved him from the peasants, as it was your warning which saved him from my fleet; and if I have taken a kingdom from him, I have given him life and a brave son-in-law. But what say you, Bergliot? Since I have sworn to be gracious to your father, would it not be well to break that silence of yours and tell me where he hides?"

Bergliot nodded happily, but said—

"I will go to him alone, after your men have left the house; for it would shame him to be seen by them in his present plight."

As for Einar, he was flushed with pleasure and stammered forth his thanks to the king. For it was the sovereign's right to grant or refuse such a marriage, and it was indeed gracious in Olaf to consent to his vassal's marriage with the daughter of his conquered foe.

But as the words of gratitude left Einar's lips, they were drowned in a great noise of shouting from the garth. The housecarls of Olaf were crying out in wonder and consternation; the peasants cheered and cheered again in vociferous joy. Olaf ran to the door.

In a moment he was back, his face fearful to look upon.

"Take her away!" he commanded Einar, pointing to the kitchen in the rear.

Einar laid his hand on Bergliot's arm; but before he could obey the doorway was darkened by the figures of two men. Seeing, Bergliot shrieked, and stood white and motionless, her eyes fixed on the fearful thing before her. A man-at-arms was ascending the steps his hand clutching the shoulder of Kark. The slave was encrusted with mud and foul with the filth of the sty; in his right hand he clutched a bloody knife; in the left he held up the gory head of Hakon Jarl. A leer of bestial triumph curled his evil lips; he brandished his dripping trophy and cried exultantly:

"Behold the head of thy foe, O king! Give me the reward which thou hast promised!"

Olaf's eyes were cold and expressionless; his voice was quiet.

"How was the deed done?" he asked.

"He was my master, and I shared his hiding-place. I stabbed him as he slept."

Olaf slowly uncoiled the golden band from his own arms and flung it in the slave's face; then turning to the man-at-arms, he commanded quietly—

"Take this beast to the scene of his treachery, and smite his head from his shoulders."

Thus did Olaf fulfill the earl's interpretation of his slave's dream and lay a red ring round Kark's neck.

THE tender kindness of the king, and Einar's loving care, somewhat comforted Bergliot. Used as she was to death and violence, her brave spirit rallied soon; but her sorrow abode long in her grave eyes. Till the first intensity of her grief subisded, Olaf forbade all to enter the house, nor would he leave her.

But he had not counted on Thora, whom the shouts of the peasants warned that something boding ill to the earl had happened. From her kitchen she ran straight to the sty; finding the boards cast aside,

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she started back just in time to meet the housecarl leading Kark to his doom. And in Kark's hand was that which broke the heart in her breast. With one wild cry she fled to the house, fell at Bergliot's feet and burst into terrible sobbing.

The woman's sorrow brought Bergliot to herself. Here was one whose suffering was greater than hers, whose life was torn up from the soil of love in which it was rooted; while her own life, bathed in grief as it was, was still beginning anew in the love of Einar. Raising the older woman, she embraced her tenderly and comforted her as best she might. Olaf rose quietly and, beckoning to Einar, went out.

The king's upraised arm imposed silence on all the host, and for an hour all was quiet as the tomb. Then Bergliot came from the house, her eyes red with weeping. Olaf and Einar went to her, their faces eloquent of the question they did not voice.

"Her grief has given her rest," Bergliot said. "She is dead."

Then, her lips trembling, but her face calm and brave, the daughter of Hakon spoke to the assembled warriors and peasants:

"The evil times which have been are no more; they have passed away in blood and horror, as the old legends of the gods foretold. The gods too have found their doom. But it is not Balder who brings in the new day of happiness and peace: it is the white Christ, the God of heaven and earth. Hail to Him, Who has given to this land salvation, and a king who is worthy to rule!"

The Christian warriors of Olaf cheered loudly, but the applause of the peasants was half-hearted. They did not fully understand, and waited in puzzled silence, till Olaf spoke:

"You, Einar Eindridison, and you, Bergliot, daughter of Hakon, have confessed Christ and shall be baptized before the people. The hand of God is in this, for a sign to them. Will you accept baptism?"

Bergliot bowed assent; but Einar answered:

"With all my heart will I accept baptism, O king; but only if thou, whose noble soul first won me to Christ, wilt stand godfather to me."

Once more Olaf's smile transfigured his majestic face.

"I will stand your godfather," he promised, "and Bergliot's also. And so soon as the water of faith has blessed your brows, I will give you into each other's keeping in the sacrament of marriage."

Turning to the people, he raised his voice, and cried—

"Freemen of Norway, will ye take me to be your king?"

The multitude went wild with joy. The housecarls flung their steel caps high in air; the peasants embraced each other, embraced the housecarls; all shouted together in a delirium of excited frenzy. The deafening tumult swelled to the skies, till the very rocks and forests seemed to rejoice with all the might of their many echoes. At last the noise died down so that Olaf could be heard.

"Then I will be your king; but there is one thing more. If ye take me, ye must take my faith with me. I will not rule over a heathen people. Swear, then, to leave your old gods, who delight in blood, in shame, in tyranny, and accept from this day the one true God and His Son, the white Christ; else I will go and leave you to your sin."

For a long, breathless moment no one spoke; then Orm Lyrgia answered for the people:

"My foster-brother has embraced your faith; and it is our custom that we hold foster-brotherhood stronger than life or death. Since he has accepted, I accept. Hail, Olaf, King of Norway! Hail to the white Christ!"

With one accord the people took up the cry. From two thousand throats it rang aloud to the four winds of heaven, its spirit spreading all over that once heathen land:

"Hail to Olaf the King! Hail to the white Christ!"

Straightway Eanmund the priest raised his voice and chanted loud and clear:

"*Gloria in Excelsis Deo!* Glory to God in the highest!"

The great throat of Olaf joined in the song, and his housecarls sang with him, till the hymn of praise stirred the blood of the excited people. Ignorant of the strange words as of the music, they strove to follow it with their rude voices lifted in ecstatic joy.

The old gods, in their blood-stained Valhalla, heard the song and, hearing, died.

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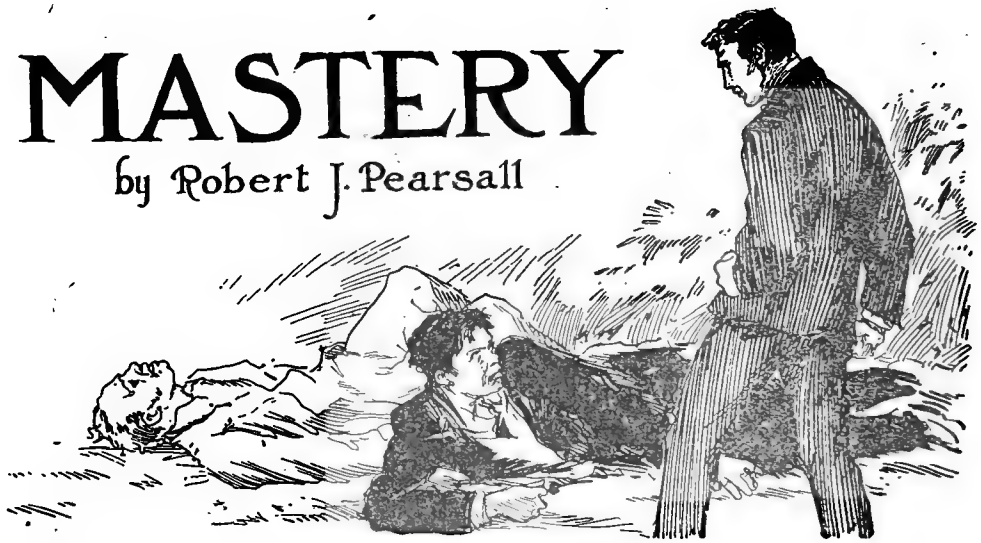
MASTERY

by Robert J. Pearsall



Author of "The Eight Vultures of Kwang-Ho," "Silver Sycces," etc.

IT WOULD be a big haul, but only the prelude to bigger operations, as Craxton had planned five years before. How far one can go on a reputation for unimpeachable honesty such as he had proposed to get—and had gotten—depended entirely on its possessor's wit. A fool would nurse it along forever for its own sake; a lesser fool would throw it away for a large lump sum; while shrewdness would find a way whereby the large lump sum might be attained and the reputation kept for other purposes—so Craxton had figured. His accustomed pertinacity had kept his mind on these two ends all through his exile in Safford—self-imposed and galling.

It is true that, although his first coup was fully planned, his future processes of getting without giving lacked definition. There had been a curious drag on his mental processes in that direction the last few years, nearly balancing the momentum of his great resolve. And it is likewise true—since a five-year habit even of rectitude has its clinging qualities—that he had seen many happier mornings than that on which he was to dip back into his old life and accomplish his first fifty thousand dollar gain. Or, rather, forty thousand dollars, since his confederates were to have their share.

Even his after-breakfast constitutional—which, for a set purpose, he had taken regularly and along the same route for five months—lacked its usual exhilarating qualities. The neat, boldly lettered sign, "Mining Expert," on his little wooden office, midway of Safford's one business street, stared at him questioning y. The few other early risers he met on his way out of town seemed to nod at him queerly, giving him a disagreeable feeling of aloofness from them. And the great hills, brown and turquoise and gold, in the lap of which the tiny oasis of human life called Safford lay like a child, seemed to reproach him with their look.

But Craxton stared back doggedly, defiant of the opinion of the mountains that had come in five years to be like friends.

"Thank the devil," he muttered a little too forcibly, "no more of this!"

And, quickening his steps, he went on into the foot-hills toward the ambush he had prepared for himself.

The road was very crooked, winding along the path of easiest resistance to Blue Gulch, twelve miles farther into the hills. On either side the terrain lifted away in long slopes dotted by great boulders, by clumps of starved shrubbery, and here and there by great live-oaks. There was no living thing in sight and yet about a mile out of Safford a sort of caution came into Craxton's manner and he continually scrutinized the borders of the road ahead of him. Although he had planned it, he seemed rather to shrink from the thing he went on to meet.

Indeed there appeared little enough in common between Craxton with his medium-sized, middle-aged, eminently respectable figure clad in his invariable pepper-and-salt

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suit, plain black tie against plain shirt, Oxford-shoed, felt-hatted, spectacled—though his eyes were clearer than ever before—and the two sinister-looking ghosts of his past who waited for him behind a clump of manzanita at a turn in the road.

He tried to see them first, but as Craxton himself, for his own protection, had insisted upon the realism of that kidnaping which was the vital point of his plan, he made no protest when they leaped out at him unexpectedly and bore him roughly to the ground. They mauled him a little, to leave evidence of a struggle, then carried him by the shoulders and knees over a small ridge covered with prickly brake until they were out of sight from the road. Near a charred tree stump and within the long shadow of a large oak they deposited him.

"You might have been a bit gentler," said Craxton in his even voice, fingering broken spectacles. "Well, Carter, how's tricks? Hello, Johnson!"

They shook hands with him rather perfunctorily and then drew back and regarded him with inquisitive and not overfriendly interest.

"Who'd 'a' thought it?" exclaimed Carter, who was a tall, well-dressed rogue with a thin, sallow face and keen, hard eyes. "You, the old Buck Hathaway! Why, you look like a country deacon. But then, you always were a thorough-going rascal."

And Johnson, short, sturdy, and merrily vicious of face, bred to the pavements but a man of many parts and just now clad in the broad Stetson, corduroys and high boots of a miner, mimicked Craxton's dignity by a ludicrous drawing up of his face and body.

"Well, what d'ye know?" he cried. "A gentleman for fair!"

THE flick of degradation Craxton felt at their familiarity was strange to him. Not so, however, was his resentment at their tone—he would have resented it as a matter of cold policy even in the old days. Crime is warfare in which subordination is necessary to both success and safety, and the sense of this necessity was still on him, as was the knowledge that flippancy is often used to cover a secret design. He straightened a little and his self-controlled face grew harder. Suddenly he wanted to postpone for a moment the matter in hand.

"You're both looking fine," he said.

They grinned at the lack of conviction in his tone.

"How's the city?" he pursued with an attempt at cordiality. "And the boys? And the old cave—is it still running?"

"Fair to middling to your first two questions," replied Carter, "and yes to the last. And now we'll pass all that up for the present, if you don't mind, and get down to business. Let's see. The stage leaves for Blue Gulch in two hours. Hollowell being on it, we've got to be ahead of it, so there's no time to spare. Besides, we've got to tie you up and tuck you away here somewhere—that's the game, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Craxton somewhat dully.

"Well, let's be cheerful about it," suggested Carter. "That'll give Johnson, here," he went on, "time to get comfortably settled at the Albatross—funny name for a mine!—while I meet Hollowell and take him out to it. That's some joke—Johnson a mine-owner! How d'ye like it, Nick?"

"Not half as good as I'll like being a bloated capitalist when I get my share of Hollowell's coin," grinned Johnson.

Craxton looked, pucker-browed, from one to the other, puzzled by a certain forced rudeness that had crept into their tones and by a queer covertness in their manner. He saw quite clearly that he must read them one of the old lessons in mastery that so long ago had made him cock of the thieves' walk north of Portsmouth Square. As he studied them it seemed to him that they both had changed considerably and not for the better. Carter's rôle of gentleman was as obviously false as the shallow light of his metallic eyes, while Johnson was merely a human animal who would slug his victim with a laugh.

"Well," he said, seeming to force the words, "it'll be a haul worth while."

"Only I'll have to pass for an hour or so as honest John Craxton who never turned a crooked penny," said Carter rather unpleasantly. "Well, I meet Hollowell at the bank. I pass for you, of course, and have papers to prove it—papers that you've got on you now. The bank's only been open six months and the bank people don't know you. Hollowell represents English capital that wants to invest in American mines. You've been corresponding with him about the Albatross—the real Albatross that's a real mine and is worth buying. Now he's come to buy it and I'm

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to sell him the fake hole in the ground you bought last month in Johnson's name? Or, rather, Johnson here is to sell it. I'm simply to pronounce it worth twice the fifty thousand, spot cash in hand—Johnson being an eccentric who likes to handle his money—for which you've written him it can be had."

"You've got it," said Craxton with a lack of enthusiasm concerning his own carefully worked-out plan that surprized even himself.

Somehow it sounded pretty mean, thus baldly stated. And his study of the faces of his accomplices had set him wondering that he had once called them friends.

"And pretty soft it is for you," went on Carter discontentedly. "You do nothing but let yourself be bound and gagged and tied here—and a nifty prison cell we've discovered for you—till we come back and split the coin with you. Then you ungag yourself and howl till somebody comes and turns you loose—and it's a perfectly clear case of a couple of crooks learning your habit of an early morning walk and abusing an honest man's reputation. You have it easy."

"I like that," retorted Craxton with some indignation. "You forget I put in five years at this and planned the whole thing, besides studying the mining game from top to bottom; there's darn few know it better. You didn't think I was letting myself in for anything easy when I told the bunch I was going out after that same honest man's reputation and a big haul. But anyway," he went on with sudden resolution, "it doesn't matter, because——"

"No, you're right it doesn't matter," interrupted Johnson roughly. "Past is past and present is present. What Carter was starting to talk about was the split."

"Yes, that's right," said Carter.

"We ain't getting enough," said Johnson.

"What? Five thousand apiece, for a day's work—" began Craxton protestingly.

THEN he stopped. There was an element in the conversation he did not understand. It was plain now that his accomplices had hardly finished greeting him before they had started to force a quarrel. At first, puzzled by a certain change of feeling within himself—really a transfer of ascendency between a dying soul force and a growing one—he had hardly noticed it. But now the fact of a premeditated design was unmistakable. A shiver of apprehension passed over him.

"It seems to me quite enough," he finished rather lamely. "But we can talk about that later. Just where had you planned to tie me? What you said sounds interesting."

Johnson flashed Carter a half-angry glance and it was evident that Carter regretted his slip of the tongue. But Craxton's look of inquiry was insistent. Finally Carter turned, with a slight shrug of the shoulders, and indicated the old oak in the shade of which they were standing.

"There's a hollow in the center of that tree," he said, "that's big enough to hold you. With a good-sized rock on top of the hollow you'd be safe there till doomsday, if you were properly tied—but of course we won't properly tie you."

"Of course not," echoed Johnson.

Craxton glanced toward the tree, but did not approach it. Its trunk was about ten feet high and several times thicker than a man's body; he recognized that its proposed use was probably quite feasible. It is characteristic of the western live-oak to have great hollows opening downward from the crotch into the hearts of otherwise healthy trees. Such a hollow might very easily serve as a cache for the bound person of a kidnaped man—or as a coffin.

Craxton's face grew thoughtful. Now he was quite sure he knew what his accomplices had planned to do. He was glad of their human impulse to gloss over their treachery slightly by first quarreling with him. Swiftly he tried to forecast the details of their action. Doubtless they had guns, while he had none; but they would hardly dare use them for fear of a chance passer-by. He remembered that Johnson had once been a prize-fighter. They were two to one. No, firearms would not be used nor needed.

Craxton switched his glasses, of which only one lens was broken, to his left hand and with an appearance of carelessness began picking up and tossing away the fragments of rock with which the ground was strewn.

"You remember Barney Ranney who tried to double-cross me?" he remarked casually. "Stole the cops' graft that had been turned over to me and figured that I'd be pinched if I squealed and pinched

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if I didn't—that he had me coming and going. But it was him that came to me, instead. Some folks thought it was an accident that he got scheduled for twenty years and had to pay up to get my help. Well, it's all over; but he was a good, obedient little boy afterward."

Carter turned a shade paler, but his emotionless eyes narrowed into slits. Johnson's brutal mouth twisted into a snarl.

"Yes, that's ancient history," said Carter. "We haven't much time to gas, either. So let's come back to the split."

"Yes," said Craxton slowly, "let's come back to the split."

As he spoke, he straightened up from bending for a good-sized rock and placed his right hand carelessly in the side pocket of his coat.

"I'll say five thousand apiece for Carter and me, out of fifty thousand, is rotten poor," growled Johnson.

"I think it's more than fair," said Craxton quietly.

"What?" purred Carter. "When we can have it all just as well?"

Ah! The game was out. Craxton knew now he had guessed rightly. He trembled a little and, as Johnson edged to a position behind him, put up his left hand as if for support, resting it against the blackened tree stump. The way he was holding it his one sound spectacle lens lay flat against the charred wood at about the height of his eyes.

"What do you mean?" he cried, quaveringly.

"Why—!" said Carter, uneasy bravado in his voice, for he could not understand why Craxton, seemingly aware of his danger, should have permitted Johnson to get behind him. "What the devil! A real kidnaping is as good as a fake one, I guess."

"Sure!" cried Johnson from behind. "You —— boob! This ain't your game any more. You've been on the square too long."

Carter, still uneasy with the knowledge that there is no adversary to be feared as much as he who willingly gives what seems a fatal advantage, nodded impatiently at Johnson. And Johnson laughed shortly and savagely as he swung at the base of Craxton's jaw.

But Craxton, whose eyes had been fixed intently on Johnson's image as it appeared in the mirror formed by the skilfully held spectacle lens against the blackened wood, whirled as Johnson struck, easily ducking the blow. At the same moment his right hand executed an upper cut. There was something inexplicable in the snapping force with which it landed on Johnson's chin. Johnson reeled backward, fell and lay quite still.

The momentum of Craxton's violent pivoting was not expended in this blow. He turned entirely around, and Carter's fist, aimed at the base of Craxton's skull, landed upon his lowered forehead. The weakness of the blow surprized Craxton, who had been living among mountain men. He dropped the rock which had helped him to dispose of Johnson, caught Carter around the waist, lifted him and flung him violently to the ground, almost on top of Johnson, who was staring up at him dazedly.

"You skunks!" he rasped. "Now will you do what I want and take what I give you?"

He glared down at them. They lay there like cowed dogs. It was the way of their kind. He did not need their protestations, which came verbosely enough the next minute, to know he would have no more trouble with them. As he had intended, he had seared anew on their hearts the flaming lesson of his mastery. Now they were his servants and they would do his will unquestioningly.

His lips writhed with contempt as he listened to them. Some of that contempt seemed to be caught in midair and to be flung back upon himself. Their fault toward him was that they had planned to betray where they had been trusted. It is a hard moment when a man sees his own sin duplicated in the acts of others and realizes it is utterly vile.

He bowed his head and said in a low voice:

"All right! All right! But I'm through with you."

Carter and Johnson got up and, without argument, started toward the road. Craxton remained where he stood a long time while the shadow of the oak tree shortened. He seemed to be thinking deeply. After a while a light came to his face—the light of the greater mastery. And very slowly, but with a look in his eyes that none had ever seen before—the look of a man sure of himself—he started back toward Safford that had so long been his home.

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THE NO-GOOD GUY

by Edgar Young

Author of "Apron Strings," "The Streak of Lean," etc.

TESTING the circuit: "Are you there? Make dots . . . . write . . . try your polar side . . . OK, she's as clear as a bell. You make 6's for p's! Cut them clean like this: 7ssissi661. Pi! Pi! I guess I'll put the bug down and try it by hand. Who's at the other end of this string anyhow?"

BARNSY was pure gold. I'm telling you because maybe you don't know it. Maybe the snap judgment you made that time Barnsy blew in and handed you a copperplate note asking for a couple of bits was all wrong. Maybe he had on a dingy white collar and no seat in his pants; maybe he had on an undershirt and an ascot tie; maybe he had two weeks' growth of beard on his face; maybe you smelt booze on him, for men drink when they're down; maybe he looked seedy and depraved, for men get to looking that way after a few weeks on the road. Maybe you turned him down for the price of a feed.

But if you did, don't tell me. Barnsy wouldn't have gone under cover with you. He would have gone to the mat for you. He would have staked you to his last cent and tried to alibi you to the world, if you had been rotten to the core. And if you had looked half-way good to him he would have blown up and left his job open so you could get a "sine." And if you had been the feller that staked him farther down the creek—man, oh man, wouldn't he have made you feel like the prodigal son coming home on Thanksgiving!

How do I know? Didn't I hit the trail with him? And it wasn't up here either, where the hitting's pretty tough at times. We had both worked everything up here that had a key and sounder fastened to it, but it was down in Spiggotty Land—anywhere south of the Rio Grande to Sandy Point, Chile, where they live life in a primitive way and men die with their boots on more often than in bed.

How do I know? You never know a guy until you get on the tramp with him and get up against the real article a few times. Then, if it's either you or him, and he don't take the chance, you can bank on him. And when you do find a true-blue guy, stick to him until the common side of Hades is working through to the Happy Hunting Grounds. Bare your chest there, home guard, I've got a knife in my sleeve. I'll take a boomer any time in preference to a homey for a fifty-fifty guy. And Barnsy was a prince among boomers.

I met up with him away down in Mexico, in the territory of Tepic and in the town of the same name. They were building a railroad in that direction but the nearest they had got was about three hundred miles away. We were the only gringos

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in the town and naturally we got acquainted the same night we hit there. Been there? Bola de Oro is the name of the hotel where we met.

He rode a little red mule in, about the size of a pint of dried apples, one of those pacing *machos de paso*, too small to pack cargo with. I had walked in from the point of steel between Escuinapa and Chispa. We were leery of each other until after supper. Every other gringo you meet down there has pushed some widow woman's calf in the creek, or something, back in the States and is waiting for the sheriff to die and the court house to burn down back home.

"I heard you drumming 'BK' in a listless sort of way on the table while you were waiting for your stack of tortillas and soggy beans," he buzzed in my ear when I drifted into the bar to get a shot of white-eye, "which means that you are one of God's own fools, an op, and a poor one at that, for you've used your key for breaking purposes at some time or other. Bad habit, that breaking. You never should indulge so long as you get the period and the sig."

That's how we began an acquaintance that lasted for years—through twenty-eight foreign countries, over the seven seas, through prosperity and slim picking, through many tight squeezes where our lives hung by the skin of our teeth. And Barnsy always checked up true-blue and four-square. I claim that's going some. I'll tell the world I was strong for Barnsy. He was Jake, re-Jake and back at you with the works.

When a man had a good word for Barnsy I was strong for that man. When some feller blew in who had staked Barnsy at some time or other, if Barnsy wasn't around, I, myself, killed the fatted calf and took on over him. And if some feller knocked Barnsy, and I heard of it—well, if I didn't lick him he knew he had been fought with.

All the old boomers you've missed from "the block" in NY and CH, Dallas, Memphis, Jax and Frisco are not dead. Thought they were myself until I found out better. They've gone down into Mexico, Central and South America and become railroad officials. How do I know? Wasn't I an official several times myself? Why it's easier to become a brass collar down there than it used to be to get "Biff" Davis in Dallas W. U. to give you another "sine" after you'd blowed up the week before and bawled him out.

And most of those old boomers are princes. I remember when Tom Hanley was chief at Mazatlan. He would fire a twenty-five-dollar greaser any time to put on a gringo at a hundred per. And when the day's work was over, Tom and the bunch foregathered in Rohrer's café. If there wasn't a freight train drifting in so that the Os-ers could hop it, Tom would send an engine and coach after them. He wouldn't have a guy working for him that he couldn't go out with. Fact! Why that bunch of brass pounders would have made Tom King of Mexico if they could.

And then there was Ed Burke. Ed heard I was on the block in Guatemala City. He was superintendent at Zacapa for the Northern at the time, but a few months before he had drifted into my sanctum at Urias, across from Mazatlan, and braced me for the price of a drink. Ed never mixed booze and work. It was one or the other clear across the board. Best railroad man in the world, spoke Spanish like a native, shot it over the wire like lightning, would go for a year on the wagon and then fall off and go to the dogs. Never quit until he couldn't mooch another dobie for a drink.

He was so cut-up about me not coming down to Zacapa to PX him for money that he wired it to me in care of the Spiggotty station agent and made him go out and hunt me up and give it to me. One hundred dollars American gold, over two thousand Guatemalan paper pesos, and some bunch of coin for a single PX. I'll tell the world that Ed Burke was a man! Beriberi got him up the Amazon in 1911.

But now and then a bad guy would drift down. I'm not saying that such a bird wouldn't have fitted in with the scenery back up in the Hampshires or Vermont on some dink little railroad, or in some such a place. I'm saying he didn't fit in down there. Down there they don't expect it. It's a land of *mañana*—tomorrow. And if there's anything more popular than *mañana*, it's *pasado mañana*, which means day after tomorrow. Smug, strict, asking for clearances, tight as wax with their coin, they didn't last long. The —— roaring clan of Typical Tropicals made life a burden

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for them and they soon beat it back whence they came. When you're in Romany, better keep an eye on the Gipsy customs.

We works by starts and jumps down through Honduras, Salvador, and Nicaragua, in which latter *pais* we get split up and hike through to the zone single-handed. When I arrived I found Barnsy jockeying the boom of a Bucyrus steam-shovel in Gatun cut. The only other open job of telegraphy I could find was engineering a locomotive crane on the rock storage dump back of New Gatun. Yep, I've got a letter signed by the colonel that I'm an A-1 crane-skinner. Proud of it.

The sun was hot enough without working by the side of a red-hot boiler, so we blows up after a few months' pay and puts for South America. It took us over three years to go from Colon to Panama City by way of the Straits of Magellan, hop-skipping-and-jumping from job to job and country to country. Finally I got back first, leaving Barnsy for the time on the G. & Q. in Ecuador.

I sure envied those fellers their little OS jobs of eight hour shifts in the screened cabins along the Panama Pike, at from a hundred and a quarter to a hundred and seventy-five per month, two days off with pay, a month's hospital time each year, and six weeks at full pay and a half rate to the States for vacation. I got one of them for myself and dressed up and began looking prosperous. Mag was chief and worked the first trick in X office, Colon; Charley was second; and I've forgotten whether it was Hirsch, Nolte, or Bill Essex working third.

I WAS drifting out of X office one day, where I'd been to draw some commissary books, when a man braced me for the price of a feed. He was just entering. I reached for my roll.

"What's yer moniker, pal?" I asks him, as I stripped off one of Uncle Sam's greenbacks.

"Sanford," he replied, eying the money hungrily.

"From the Costa Rica Southern?"

He nodded.

"You were chief at Limoncito, weren't you?"

"I sure was."

I put the money back into my pocket quickly.

"Yes," I told him, "and you were no darn good either. I never knew you, but a pal of mine did. He blew in there a little over three years ago, and you and your bunch let him sleep on the wharf. The mosquitoes chewed him until he went down with fever. He told me that you hid the Durham in the table drawer when he tried to roll a pill out of it. You and your bunch let him walk from there here, down the beach trail and through the jungle. If I did the right thing I would turn you over to the Spiggotty police and have them put you in the chain gang."

"Buddy, you've got me wrong. I never did anything of the kind."

I shook my fist under his nose.

"Don't tell me I have you wrong! Barnsy told me about you. If he said it, it's gospel. You fellows are all tame when you hit the rocks yourselves. I know how you are. When you're up you're pretty cocky but when you're down it's another tune. I'm going to give you a taste of what you gave Barnsy in Limoncito. I'm going in right now and queer you with Mag. You might as well get ready to starve to death for I'm going to make it my business to see that you don't exist on this canal zone."

I went in and tipped it off to Mag that there was a no-good guy outside who would be in for a sine. Mag nodded. There never was a sine for a no-good guy on the P.R.R. when Mag was chief, and Charley fed an army when he worked first trick.

When I came out the old, gray-haired tramp operator was sitting on the steps of the office with his head in his hands. He took no notice of me, but I stopped over him long enough to tell him that he might as well start walking to some other country, for I would queer him from one end of the zone to the other.

I began to get busy doing that same thing. When I get back up to Gatun I got on the phone and called up every administration employment office from Cristobal to Balboa and described the old man as everything from an escaped lunatic to a child murderer. I cuts in on the message wire and tips off the fact that a bird answering Sanford's description would be around pxing in a day or so, and that they should give him the flat stuff with both hands and A.N.D.—absolutely nothing doing. I sure

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loaded the dice and cold-decked the cards for that old tramp.

Daily I began to get reports of how well I was succeeding. Every little while I would get wind of some one who had shot the gaff into the old duffer. I kept cases on him and when I heard of him being in one of the zone towns I made a report that he was there to the Q.M.D., and they ejected him when he tried to sleep in the quarters. He left off coming into the zone and tried to panhandle in the native towns of Colon and Panama.

I sailed around and had the police chase him, and a time or two I was the cause of getting him locked up in one of their evil-smelling hoosgows. Nothing that I could do to make life a burden for him was left undone. Finally, after a few weeks he disappeared. I felt sure he had hiked out and I cackled and laughed to myself when I thought of him hitting the swampy jungle trails.

At about this juncture Barnsy blew in from Guayaquil, bringing all the latest South American gossip and an eighty-five dollar *Jipi-japa* hat for yours truly. After I had drawn enough commissary books to get him rigged out in zone clothes in place of the high-bellied breeches, short coat, and long-toed gaiters that were a source of amusement to the States tourists, I broke the news to him that Sanford had been on the zone. His face went black and his teeth set.

"Been here and gone? That's just my luck. I'd give my bank roll to have laid eyes on that varmint for a few minutes. Why in heck didn't you cable me he was here? He's the bird that hid the Durham. I'd have Durhamed him if I had been here. I'd have torn him up as if the hogs had had him, for he had police protection in Limoncito so I couldn't do it there. You let him come here and get away without clawing him?"

I started in to clear myself. I told Barnsy just how I had done from the first time I laid eyes on Sanford. The picture I drew of him being shunted and kicked from pillar to post would have drawn tears from the eyes of a Gatun Lake crocodile, but it only made Barnsy chuckle. He patted me on the shoulder.

"You did good, Sandy, but you ought to have give him a good hammering besides."

"I'd have beat him up, too, into the bargain," I told Barnsy, "but the devil was so old that it wouldn't have been any credit to have worked on him."

BARNSY left off grinning and stared at me.

"Old? What do you mean, old? He couldn't have been over thirty-five! How young do they have to be before you class them as fighting age?"

I went kinda sick in the chest. The man I had been hounding wasn't a day younger than sixty and he had looked seventy-five the last time I saw him. I asked Barnsy weakly to describe his man. Before he had got half through I called up Mag on the wire and told him to send out a man to RJ me on the first rock train. I had spilled the beans and thrown the hooks into the wrong guy. He had told the truth. I had had him wrong from the first. Barnsy kept shaking his head sadly.

"I'll bet this old feller was all to the good. He must have been all right or he wouldn't have felt so bad when you called him a no-good guy. We've got to find him and try to square things the best we can."

He kept talking along this line until I feel forty per cent. worse than a murderer. I calls up the zone police stations and the chiefs of the Spiggotty police in Panama and Colon and can't hear hide nor hair of where Sanford has gone to. When my relief drops off of a lidgerwood train, Barnsy and I put for Colon.

We got the Spig op in the Federal office to call up David, Boquete, Bocas del Toro and other towns and ask if they have seen this old gringo. All of them report that no man answering this description has been seen. That makes us feel worse yet, for it looks as if the old op has died on the trail somewhere.

There's only one thing to do when you hand a guy a dirty deal and he don't deserve it, that's to try and fix it up the best way possible. The next morning, according to the plans we had made the night before, Barnsy put out south in the direction of Colombia on the Chucunaque side, for no man could get into the San Blas side if he tried.

I took the empire trail leading into northern Panama and Costa Rica. At Chorerra I hired a native cowboy and a couple of ponies, and we raked the whole Chiriqui country with a fine tooth comb.

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I sent him back from the edge of the savanna and put through on foot. At Changuenola I hired some Talamanca Indians and I went broke sending them into all the villages clear across to Boquete and David. There wasn't any trace of him.

The longer I searched the worse I felt. I got a canoe paddler to take me up the Sexaola a ways and I put through the jungles for San José. I was traveling fast and light and hadn't even taken the precaution to bring along some quinine and a net to keep off the mosquitoes. In three days I was packing such a fever that I didn't know whether I was backing up or going ahead. The rainy season come on, and it rained day and night. It seemed to me that I wandered around through those swamps for about ten years, but I guess it was only five or six days. I came to a railroad track and right by the side of it I laid down for the count.

When I finally quit fighting with red iguanas, blue alligators, green elephants, yellow snakes, and a host of phantasmagorial—UX that one—imps, I was in a strange Spig hospital with two people conversing over my bed. One was a strange American I had never seen before and the other a native nurse, also unknown. I turned my head and looked down through the palm trees at Limoncito Bay, with the general office of the Costa Rica Southern Railroad perched at the end of the wharf.

"Let me know how he is making out," I heard the American say in broken Spanish, "and don't stand back on what it costs. I've got the money to pay for it."

He came and stood over me. He was tall, slender and not bad looking except for a too small mouth and a narrow forehead.

"Who are you?" I asked feebly.

He grinned sheepishly and asked me how I felt. I told him I thought I would make the hill and further questioned him as to his identity.

"Never mind that. It isn't because I'm who I am, or you're who you are that I'm trying to pull you through. Just about the time the section gang brought you in on the push car I got word that some strange American had walked a hundred miles into Colombia and rescued my poor old dad who'd strayed off down in there and got lost. The old man was down for the count, and this man got him over to the Atrato, packed him part of the way it seems, brought him down the river in a dugout and into Colon on a coast schooner. It sure has made one big change in me."

I sure felt about as good as he did when I heard that, but I never let on who I was. Finally I got so I could crawl around the town, although I was pretty tottery on my feet, and I used to drop in for a while each day and carry the banner with young Sanford on his job.

One day I asked him how it had been that his old man had also worked as chief there, and he told me it was when he was in the States for a vacation that he had had his father come down for the purpose of relieving him. I guess if the truth be told the old man hadn't had much money and had drifted down to Panama to try and get a job for himself.

A man who had hid the Durham from a brother telegrapher couldn't have been very generous to any one. But a change sure had come over him. He paid all my bills, staked me to good cigars, kept me in spending money until I got strong, and finally almost wept on my shoulder when he bought me a ticket and put me on the boat for Colon. The ice in his heart had melted and he would always be a good guy.

When I hit the zone Mag told me that Barnsy and old man Sanford were over in Ancon. I guess the dose of blackwater fever they had picked up was even worse than my malaria. I found them both sitting out on the porch in pajamas chewing the rag.

Old Boomer Sanford's voice rose shrilly as he bawled out his son to Barnsy. He was swearing for the hundredth time that day that he would never claim him as a son and never speak to him again. And then I chips in with my little tale and all three of us sure felt good over the way things had turned out.

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GENTLEMEN OF THE NORTH

A four-part story

PART II

by Hugh Pendexter

Author of "Red Belts," "When Kentucky Starved," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

BLACK CHABOT, manager of the Pembina post of the North West Company, was as fond of "high wine"—alcohol diluted in water—as were the Indians with whom he traded. He was more lavish with the "new milk" than were the other posts, and consequently his Chippewas were usually drunk. Gradually his power was waning, for the Indians had little respect for the white man who got drunk. As his clerk, I was the only one at the post who still held their respect, for I never drank with them. Even Old Tabashaw, their chief, seldom disobeyed me.

It was April in the first year of Black Chabot's management, 1804; new skins were coming in, and the Indians were in an ugly, drunken mood. I realized that they were bent on making trouble.

"We will kill the white men and take their new milk for ourselves."

It was old Tabashaw the Chippewa Chief who had spoken, and I knew the threat was not an idle one.

"The Sioux! The Sioux are upon us!"

Black Chabot brought this news. There was nothing that could sober the Chippewas so quickly as this alarm, and only their preparations to defend themselves saved the white men at the post.

Flat Mouth, one of the Chippewas, was the only one I felt I could trust, and so I dispatched him to learn if the Sioux were really upon us. When he returned, it was with the news that the smoke which had caused the alarm had been made by friendly Crees and Assiniboins bringing trade. The danger was past, but the rumor had served its turn; the Chippewas were quiet.

The next day I was dispatched to the X. Y., a rival post, to make an agreement against sending men out to drum up trade. At the N. W. posts on the Reed and on the Scratching, I stopped to order the managers to be prepared to send their skins down the river. I knew that the brigade would start soon and was happy, for back at headquarters I had determined to ask for transfer—anything to get away from Black Chabot.

Both Desset and Probos, the managers of these two posts, aroused my suspicions. They seemed to be madly hurrying to pack their skins, but the brigade seldom left till June and it was now only April. Desset claimed that his books had been burned by a drunken Indian, and all his accounts destroyed. He seemed, too, to have very few skins, yet the season had been a good one. Then from one of Desset's men, I learned that the manager had been sending skins down the river secretly. Desset had secured his post through Black Chabot, so I suspected that all of the managers were involved in a plot to cheat the North West Company.

At the X. Y. I reached an agreement with Red Dearness, the rival manager. There, too, I tried to solve the mystery of Red Dearness' woman, reported by some to be a half-breed. I heard her speak, and knew from her talk that she was educated, but I did not see her.

The next morning at the Scratching post, I was dumfounded to see Black Chabot and the brigade coming down the river, their canoes loaded with skins. Why had they started so early? It was then that the blow fell. Black Chabot ordered me to stay at the Pembina post and take charge during the Summer. I was not to go back to the country of the whites where I had not been in three years. The disappointment was great, but I mastered it and started back to the post while Chabot and Desset set off. On my way I saw that Red Dearness, too, was going down the river with his skins.

Another Sioux scare sent Flat Mouth and myself south of the Pembina to investigate. A detachment of warriors was encountered, and Flat Mouth brought back four scalps.

At the post some Crees and Assiniboins came in, but they refused to hunt. I finally found the reason. Their medicine had been stolen. The voice from

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Rivière Qu'Appelle, the River That Calls, had disappeared. This river, a main fork of the Assiniboin, was regarded with much fear by the Indians of the Northwest. It was supposed to be haunted by a mighty spirit which cried aloud in its flight up and down the course. Such a voice had been heard on the Pembina recently, and the Crees believed it had been stolen by the Chippewas.

Accustomed to Indian superstition, I realized what disastrous results this would have on the morale of my hunters. I promised that the voice should be restored in a month.

CHAPTER IV

SUPERSTITION VERSUS RUM

FLAT MOUTH would not utter a word when I attempted to question him about the strange sound. I thought to betray him into some expression by making light of the incident and attributing it to some animal call. He smiled grimly and turned away from me. He knew that I knew no animal was ever heard in the Red River country to give voice to that peculiar cry.

The effect on the Crees was tremendous. Their expressed determination to fight the Chippewas and compel a return of the Voice was not repeated after White Buffalo called me to the gate to hear the wailing up the Pembina. They became meek and humble in bearing, and their leader pathetically explained:

"The new milk made us talk bad talk. We can not fight against the Chippewa medicine. We only want to stay where we can hear the Voice."

For several nights I remained awake, hoping the phenomenon would be repeated. As nothing happened, the edge of my interest wore off and I became busy with the ordinary humdrum which occupies the attention of the *bourgeois* of a post, as the French called a manager. We turned the horses out to graze on the plains and fired the dead grass along the east bank of the river. Two skin canoes, loaded with beaten meat and a few skins, came down the Pembina from the hills hut. I sent back several kegs of mixed wine and orders for our man to keep the Indians there, to tell them they would get nothing to drink if they came to the post.

That the X. Y. was pursuing its silly policy of attempting to carry on trade without rum was again evidenced by the arrival of several small bands of Indians, Chippewas who were bringing their hunt to me although they had taken debts from the opposition. They denounced the X. Y. for refusing them liquor, and again I marveled that Angus did not come to me and borrow a few kegs.

Then came the Rat with two prime packs of beaver. As he was still in the employ of the X. Y. I hesitated to trade, fearing he had stolen the skins, but they bore none of the McKenzie marks, and finally I believed him when he insisted he was trading them in behalf of two tents of Crees who were afraid to visit me from fear of the Chippewas. And the Rat wanted rum.

I accommodated him and questioned him concerning affairs at the post. He was curiously silent; not a bit like his usual loquacious self. When he spoke it was to return evasive replies. To my pointblank query, "Isn't Angus planning to come here for liquor?" he replied—

"No, I don't think."

I next took up the Crees' fear of the Chippewas and demanded to know on what it was based. He shook his head. I decided they believed our Indians had stolen the Voice from Rivière Qu'Appelle, but as he did not touch on the subject, and as I was not anxious to have it revived, I held my tongue. I did say, however:

"Tell the Crees they are welcome here. No Chippewa will bother them when they bring in their hunt."

Presenting him with two quarts of liquor for bringing the trade, and a keg for the Crees, I saw the rascal to his canoe and was glad to be rid of him.

About the first of May old Tabashaw and seven other chiefs, including a Cree and two Assiniboins, descended upon me for their annual Spring presents. I gave each a keg of liquor, a new coat, some red feathers and tobacco. The usual drinking match followed, keeping me busy for two days preventing murder. It was the Chippewas who seemed hungry for trouble, the others, especially the Crees, appearing to be cowed. Tabashaw, in particular, was in a mood to tickle the devil. Twice I took a knife away from him while a Cree sat with a bowed head, singing that he was not afraid to die.

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This meek submission to a ranting scallywag like Tabashaw was not a bit like the Crees' ordinary behavior and I could only attribute it to the theft of the Voice. However, although I kept with them and listened sharply to their words, I heard nothing said which would indicate the Chippewas felt they held any advantage in medicine. If the news of the Voice had penetrated the hills, none of my visitors revealed that fact. After the second day I drove the whole party back to the hills to finish their kegs and turned to stringing eighty fathoms of sturgeon net across the river. Flat Mouth, who was my helper on the opposite bank, ceased his labors and stared down-stream. I turned my head and beheld two canoes, the clerk Angus occupying the first. The second held a figure heavily cloaked and with a *capote* drawn over the head.

I smiled grimly at Angus as he slowly paddled to the shore. He had been forced to come for the rum. If he had held off another month I would have cleaned up all the Spring beaver in the department.

ANGUS jumped out, pulled up his canoe, turned and did a similar service for the second, and briefly announced—

"Miss Dearness, of the X. Y., come to talk with you."

With this astounding statement he walked rapidly towards the post, leaving me alone with the hooded figure.

More than one Northman had taken an Indian wife, and whenever Dearness' "woman" was mentioned I had taken it for granted that an Indian spouse was meant. Instead of his wife it was his daughter, the woman who had talked to me in three languages from behind the rawhide curtain at the X. Y. post. This discovery was so overwhelming that for a moment I forgot to be surprized at Dearness' departure without her.

"I am honored," I began, bowing to her.

She threw back the *capote*, and I was stricken dumb at the revelation. Expecting to find a mixed blood, I could only stare foolishly at the clear skin, an English skin, and the glory of her red hair. There was no mistaking her being her father's daughter. For nearly a year I had seen only the coarse, greasy black hair of the Indians and the disheveled locks of the few white men. Here was a head with a fiery nimbus. Not auburn or yellow, but red—a red that would fire the heart of a warrior about to take the war-path. I have a vague recollection of a skirt of blue cloth, such as the Spanish far-south trade with the Missouri Indians, and a coat of dressed leather that fitted her superb figure snugly. But it was the hair that held my eyes, much as fire draws a moth.

"I didn't know you had been left behind," I heard myself observing. "Or did you and your father go only as far as the Forks?"

"I stayed behind to look after the post, to see it wasn't burned down while the clerk was away," she answered, her blue eyes leveled on me with the utmost composure.

"Then Angus is only a clerk and you're the *bourgeoise?*"

"Quite correct! And your name is Franklin, according to the agreement you signed at the post. You represent Mr. Chabot here this Summer."

"You and I are of equal rank. I represent the N. W.," I corrected.

"That makes it all the better." She smiled graciously and nodded her head. Then reproachfully, "You have been trading rum for skins which should have been traded at our post."

"I've traded rum for skins," I qualified. "Whether they should have gone to you is another question. It's customary to trade rum, you know."

"Rum would have kept the skins at the X. Y.," she quietly informed.

"Of course—I had no idea you were down there. Really, I had no idea you were you. The hunters spoke of the 'woman.' I supposed you were his wife."

"His Indian wife," she gravely amended.

I nodded and continued:

"I took it for granted Angus was there alone with the interpreter. I've been prepared to let him have a few kegs any time he asked for it. It wasn't my place to force it upon him, but you are more than welcome. How much do you want?"

"I don't want any. Some of the X. Y. stock is stored at the post."

I sank down on the nose of a canoe, almost doubting my ears. And her blue eyes were gathering storm signs, which was also bewildering.

"Well," I helplessly replied, "if you have

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rum and don't want any from the N. W., I don't see how I can help you. You've refused to trade rum for skins. Surely you're not going to make the startling suggestion that I do the same?"

"It would be a very sensible suggestion. I had thought of making it. Now I see it would be wasting my breath—that you would never consider it."

"Not for a second! Why, Miss Dearness, nothing but rum will bring in the skins. You know that. I can't imagine your father getting a hunt without using high wine. It's the one thing the Indian can not resist."

"He has always used it and always will," she calmly admitted. "But I will not."

"Then you'll do no Summer trading on the Red," I assured her.

"That doesn't follow," she murmured, half closing her eyes and watching me sleepily. "I'm only staying till my father returns."

"Does he know you're killing his trade in this way?"

"Not unless he has very strong medicine." Her teeth flashed in a smile.

"I see," I mumbled, my brains quite addled by the red of her hair and the deep blue of her eyes. "Of course."

"When I came here I was prompted by an impulse," she ran on. "Before I jumped ashore I knew my errand was foolish."

"Don't say that," I begged. "You've given me the greatest surprize in my life. Surprizes up here are good for one."

"I've nothing to say to your trading rum," she imperturbably continued. "It's customary. But there are some skins owed the X. Y. on debts taken before my father left for the Forks. You had no right to trade for those. Even the rum was passed over for them."

"It's not nice, this taking skins owed on debts. But your father has had few scruples, if you'll forgive me for saying it."

"Black Chabot had none. I should never have come to see him."

This was either a compliment or a reflection on my youth.

"I know the fur trade quite well," I said. "It isn't for the N. W. to safeguard the X. Y. interests. I can't imagine Sir Alexander McKenzie going out of his way to prevent Simon McTavish losing a profit. This is a trading-post."

"Quite so—and you approve of Black Chabot's way of fighting women for their furs," he sneered.

"You know better. I have never fought with women. There is a vast difference between holding up a woman and taking her furs by force, whether she owes them on a debt or is free to trade where she will, and trading for skins voluntarily brought here."

"Then you refuse to stop trading with Indians who have not settled their debts with us?"

"I must. The proposition is absurd. Your father would never make such a request. When the X. Y. and the N. W. make a bargain to that effect, all well and good. But the liquor you have stored and won't use would bring in every debt owed you."

"I'm disappointed in you," she said.

It was on my tongue to say I was in no way disappointed in her, but there was something in her clear gaze, a strength in her simple dignity, that held me constrained and awkward. She made me feel as if I were very young and callow, a capacity some women have, I've discovered. I resented it.

"You can't prove your experiment a success if I stop trading rum," I argued. "If your medicine is strong, the only way you can prove it is by overcoming opposition."

"I believe I understand that much quite thoroughly," she gravely said, yet making me feel she was laughing at me all the time.

"Are you afraid of the Indians? Angus wouldn't be much help in time of danger. The Rat is—well—a rat."

"I'm not afraid. They never bother me. I come and go. I'm something of a mystery to them. They seem glad to keep clear of me when they see me outside the fort."

"Do you go any distance from the fort?"

"Oh, I go as I wish. I've been as far as Grandes Fourches in my canoe—alone. Several times I've gone on my horse to the Pembina and followed it to the hills. Now I'll be returning to the Scratching. But please remember, I think you're making a mistake in taking furs belonging to the X. Y."

"I shall have to risk it. You go up the Pembina. Do you sometimes sing when you're traveling alone?"

She gave me a quick little glance and admitted—

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"I sing if I wish to."

"Then you're the medicine that has stolen the Voice from Riviere Qu'Appelle," I exclaimed, very proud I had solved the mystery.

"I have been on the River That Calls. I know the Indian story about the Voice. But I don't catch your meaning," she said, turning back and waiting for me to explain.

"Why, the Crees and Assiniboins say the Voice has left the river—probably high water and a change in air currents, perhaps just their imagination. The fact remains they believe the Voice has been stolen. They say the Chippewas' medicine took it away. They've heard you singing at night. That's a positive proof to them the Chippewas have the Voice a captive down here on the Red and its branches."

AS I eagerly said all this she turned her head aside and half closed her eyes. If her clear-cut profile had not remained immobile I would have sworn she was laughing at me.

"Very interesting! Very real to the Indians, too. From what I've learned in going about with my father there are no unfair practises among rival posts," she murmured. "That is your code?"

"We have spoiled the Indians. We stop at nothing which does not involve premeditated murder. Your father, you know, advised Little Crane to kill me for preventing his trading our skins to you."

"Very likely, although I did not hear him," she coolly commented. "I'm glad to get your point of view. I've said I thought you were making a mistake in trading for our skins. I meant a mistake that would hurt you morally. Now I'll make a little prophecy. You've made a mistake in a business sense. I see fur coming back to the X. Y. post on the Scratching. And I thank you."

"For what?"

"For helping me bring the trade to our post."

Again she stared at me sleepily through her half closed lids.

"So you've changed your mind. You will use the rum your father left behind."

"No, I'll trade superstitions."

I didn't catch her meaning.

"Superstition has brought many troubles to the Indians," I reminded.

"So it has to the whites. Superstition was here before the whites came, but we brought rum into the country. We're responsible for that."

Her quaint and prim notions concerning rum and Indians amused me. But as she amused, she also thrilled me. She was a white woman, wonderful to look at. She was well educated. She was refined. No wonder the impression she made on me grew stronger each moment I stared. The remarkable hair, the fine texture of her skin despite the Red River sun, wind and storms, all such may be found in many women. In addition to these physical charms, however, was an indefinable quality that strangely affected me. I did not even know that I approved of her, but still she fascinated me.

My first thought was that she was masculine—this, perhaps, because of her composure—and I never cared for masculine women. Almost any white woman would look fair to a man marooned on the lower Red for a year. I could have fallen madly in love with Miss Dearness if she had been less pronounced. A colorless type would have permitted my hungry imagination to add all sorts of attributes, and, being in love with love, a commonplace woman would have become exalted. But Miss Dearness was a woman a man must like or dislike. Her personality was so strong that one's fancy could not add to or take from it. There was no room for deceiving one's self.

Men long in the wilds will be overwhelmed by the femininity expressed by the first woman they meet on returning to civilization. Although I was hungry for the companionship of a woman, I could find no commonplaces about Miss Dearness which my zeal could transmute into ideals. She was what she was. It was almost as if she had been created for just one man and would repel all except her true mate. And he, meeting her, would wade through hell for her.

She also appealed to me in this fashion; unless a man was in love with her he would have no scruples in opposing her, just as I felt no scruples now in taking all the X. Y. trade I could get. This must have resulted from her air of self-dependence, the conviction that she did not need to be protected.

"You'll trade superstition," I repeated,

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groping for her meaning. "And I have helped you?"

"Superstition was here before rum. It's stronger. You may think you are holding them—you will hold them at times, when the rum is under their noses—but you'll learn that superstition has the first call on them. Yes, you have helped me immensely with your story of the Voice stolen from Riviere Qu'Appelle. I know the river and the strange song it makes at times. You tell me they heard me singing and thought it the lost Voice. I confess it. I took the Voice." And she paused to smile at me triumphantly.

"But what of it?" I asked, tingling beneath the electricity of her smile.

"If they would have it back, they must come to me—bring trade to me."

"Impossible!" I jeered, wondering how she could be so credulous. "You forget that I only have to tell them what you say to make them see they're mistaken."

"Tell them. I shall be obliged to you if you will. You have refused a very reasonable request in declining to stop trading for skins taken on X. Y. debts. Without intending to do so, you have given me the advantage. I'll strip your Spring hunters of their furs. The N. W. will have some unpaid debts as well as the X. Y."

Tender, gentle women arouse one's pity when they attempt defiance. She struck sparks with every word.

"Rum against superstition," I challenged, hungering to trade with her and to best her.

Like the average man, my instinct toward the sex was to protect, but I was keen to humiliate this woman.

"So let it be. I'll wager all the furs I've taken on rum."

Without heeding me further she walked to her canoe and whistled a long quavering note. Angus came on the run around the corner of the potato-field stockade. He had been trained to leave her to look after herself, for he made no move to push off her canoe, although his bearing was as skulking as that of a whipped dog. Staring at me without seeing me, she sent her craft out into the current. Then, resting her paddle, she lifted her head and sounded a bell-like call that rose and fell and trilled far up the river with a strange sweetness. With never a glance at me she adjusted her *capote* and started down the river. And, as she went, she sounded the call again, distance giving it an eery note.

I was aroused from my meditations by the splash of a paddle above me. It was Flat Mouth, and now he was running toward me. I greeted him with a laugh and pointed after the woman, saying—

"There goes the white woman whose voice the foolish Crees and Assiniboins took to be the Voice of the Calling River."

The fellow's behavior both irritated and amused me. His strong face showed a curious touch of timidity. His gaze followed the dancing canoe until a bend in the river snatched it from view.

"The white woman is very big medicine," he grunted, speaking to himself rather than to me.

"But she is the trader's daughter. She sings when she is out on the river. Foolish Indians heard her singing at night and thought it was a spirit's voice," I impatiently reminded.

"There was a spirit on the River That Calls. It is gone. This woman with the medicine hair——"

The rest was a mumble I could not catch. He hurried to the stockade, forgetful of our unfinished task with the sturgeon net.

I was greatly disappointed in the Pillager chief. I had been with him on so many trips and always had found him so brave and loyal and sensible.

WITH a wealth of new thoughts I resumed my daily tasks. During that week Probos came up from the Reed, bringing women of several families to plant the potatoes, corn, squash and the like, and to burn the brush where we had cut last season's fuel.

Never in all my experiences on the river had I seen such tremendous flights of wild pigeons as now. From the southern to the northern horizon the heavens fairly throbbed with them, and their passage arched the sky and shut off the sunlight, leaving the plains in gloom. The Reed River Indians held some secret pow-wows concerning the pigeons. They had no rum, but I knew they were making medicines. Old Tabashaw unexpectedly arrived from the hills with Black Robe and the latter's family. The Robe hadn't a single skin and would give no answers when I inquired for his hunt.

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Tabashaw asked for liquor and, despite my vow to give none except when skins had been killed, I measured him out a dram —just enough to make him mad for more. Then I asked him why the Robe came empty handed, and why the hillmen were not sending in anything. He was dying for another drink, but surprized me by simulating ignorance, talking vaguely about certain difficulties which I knew did not exist. The Robe got never a drop and, after hanging about the fort for several days, disappeared.

Shortly after his going I discovered that a nine-gallon keg was missing from my stock. It would never do to let an Indian get clear with stolen property, especially if it were rum. From Flat Mouth I learned the Robe had gone down the river. Believing he had made for the Reed camp, where he would go on a drunk with Probos' hunters, I put after him.

I lost a day at the Reed camp, waiting for some of the hunters to appear, only to learn the rascal had paused just long enough to cook and eat a sturgeon. Had the hunters suspected he had nine gallons of rum with him, he never would have taken it away. On leaving the Reed he had continued north, the hunters said.

I followed the west bank down to the Scratching, searching it carefully for signs of the thief. If I did not find him at the Scratching I intended searching the east bank going back. I landed a short distance above our abandoned post and cast about for a trace of him. Then, fearing lest he might get inside the fort and set it afire, I left the woods and ran to the post.

Entering the stockade, I found him asleep near the gate, but there was no sign of the keg. I kicked him awake and demanded to know where he had hidden the rum. He scrambled to his feet, intending, as I supposed, to lead me to the liquor. With the ferocity of a cornered Canada lynx he was on me, his knife slashing at my breast. My stout leather coat protected me long enough to bring up the end of my paddle under his chin.

Down he went, but was up again, insane from rum and rage. I feared I would have to kill the brute when Miss Dearness' voice, trilling and wailing, penetrated his black mood. He ceased fighting and the knife dropped from his limp hand.

I wheeled just as she reached the gate. One sweep of her blue eyes took in the situation. Puffing and panting from my exertions and anger, I do not suppose I presented a very pretty picture. Anyway, there was disdain in her glance, and before I could speak she was saying:

"It isn't for the X. Y. to return goods stolen from the N. W., but I suppose you want the liquor this Indian took. I saw him carrying a keg into the woods."

Then to the Robe, speaking his own tongue even better than I could, she commanded—

"Go!"

He ran to the timber and I ironically observed—

"I thank you for your good intentions, but you've allowed him to escape."

"If there is any liquor left he will bring it," she coldly retorted.

I smiled skeptically and lingered, not to get back the rum but to study her. She appeared to be oblivious of my presence, quite as much as if I had been something impersonal, as a tree or rock. I stared at her without any attempt to conceal my interest. I knew I should never feel satisfied until I had aroused her anger or her fear. I was in a frame of mind to dislike her exceedingly.

Something thudded behind me and I whirled and raised my paddle, only to find Black Robe sullenly standing beside the keg. I tipped it with my foot and knew that less than a quart had been taken. The expression of disgust on her face as she watched me make an inventory of the liquor was maddening. One might think she regarded me as an animal instead of a Northman in the making.

Her own father was famous—she would say "infamous" if he were not her father—for the big trades he made by means of alcohol and water. He was accused of one trick I never had been guilty of—using a mug half filled with tallow on an Indian too drunk to realize he wasn't getting a full drink. But then, Chabot did it too. The annoying fact remained that by some influence she had compelled Black Robe to bring back the stolen liquor. I would have given twenty kegs if the rascal, on striking the woods, had kept on going. I wouldn't tickle her vanity by asking how she did it; I did say, however—

"I'll send down to you the next furs offered me by an Indian owing you a debt."

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"Owing the X. Y.," she carelessly corrected. "Why not one of the packs received by you yesterday?"

"None came in yesterday," I informed.

"Then the day before," she went, on smiling.

"It's fully a week since any of my Indians have brought in a hunt," I explained. "No X. Y. Indians have offered me furs since your visit."

She opened wide her mouth and laughed with such a mocking lilt as to send the blood sizzling into my scrawny face. Sobering abruptly and with no trace of merriment in her lips or eyes, she coldly reminded—

"Superstition against rum."

Raising her fingers to her lips, she whistled an ear-splitting signal, and in twenty seconds Angus came running through the gate.

"How many skins have we traded this week, Angus?" she shot at him.

"Between sixty and seventy."

Had he told me that and she had not been present, I should have informed him he was a little liar. As it was, however, I clinched my teeth, knowing only too well he spoke by the book.

"And how many of them were brought by hunters owing N. W. debts?" she sweetly continued.

This made Angus uneasy. He did not want to answer. She snapped her eyes, and he replied—

"All but four of them, Miss Dearness."

"Now I understand why my Indians haven't come in," I confessed. "Yet it's only half a test. This thief has brought his hunt to you." I pointed at the Robe. "If he hadn't stolen the rum he would have returned here and stolen the skins back to trade to me for high wine. You've started a dangerous game. I shall stick to what I've told them—no rum without skins. Rum they will have, and they can't steal skins at our post. You're responsible for anything that happens down here."

"Mr. Franklin, you understand that you and I think alike on lots of things concerning the fur trade," timidly spoke up Angus.

"You go back to the post. We've left it alone in the Rat's care," she gently commanded, and Angus left us forthwith, accepting the rebuke without a word.

HER eyes were laughing as she faced about and confessed:

"The Crees and Assiniboins bring me trade as a bribe for me to send the Voice back to Riviere Qu'Appelle. The Chippewas bring their hunt to keep the Voice on the Red. So far as being in any danger, you should know I am a medicine woman to them. My hair is very great medicine. Old Tabashaw says I am a spirit-medicine. I have no sex for them."

"——! But you're a tearing beauty!" bawled Black Chabot's bull of a voice behind us. "No sex, eh? And I never guessed it. I blundered right by and never knew it."

I was amazed to behold him there on the Scratching when he should be on the Lake of the Woods or Rainy River. He had been drinking, of course, and never had I seen his eyes look more evil. He glared at the pliant figure of Miss Dearness until his gaze became defilement. She, cold as ice, did not flinch before his lecherous staring. I could not see that his brutal presence quickened her heart by a single beat.

"You did not go through with your brigade," she remarked. "Did you overtake the X. Y. and my father?"

"I overhauled the X. Y., all right," he hoarsely responded, edging a step closer to her. "That's how I learned you, his daughter, was here. All white—and a red head."

"Then you did overtake my father?" she demanded.

"I'd have to travel considerable to overtake him," he informed. "He's dead."

Her face went blank and with a little sigh she leaned limply against the stockade. With the grunt of a wild animal Chabot snarled—

"I come way back here to overtake you, my pretty."

It was beastly. He lunged forward to seize her. I shoved the paddle between his feet and brought him crashing down on his face, and as he fell I gave him a thump on the head. He lay very still, his face buried among the broad chips left from hewing the stockade timbers. Across the clean chips the blood trickled until I believed his fall, or my blow, had ruptured a blood-vessel.

"He's a black-hearted liar," I told her. "I haven't doubt but what he's made it up

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out of whole cloth. Don't you be afraid. I shall kill him if he bothers you again. The N. W. would expect me to do it."

"Black-hearted, yet he told the truth," she whispered. "My father was suffering with incurable heart trouble. He knew it was only a question of time. He was very loyal to Sir Alexander and his partners, and he hoped to last until he could send some one out here to take over the post. He didn't dare send me while he stayed, for fear he would die before his successor could come. He had a horror of the post being without a master, so I stayed and he went."

She talked like one dazed, and yet she had not given way to her grief in the usual womanly way.

"Pack up," I directed. "I will have a canoeman here just as soon as I can make our post and start him off. He will be Flat Mouth. You can trust him absolutely. Take Angus with you; he'd be helpless up here alone. Flat Mouth will see you to the Forks. The rest of the trail is easy."

She pointed to Chabot, who was now showing signs of life, and directed,

"Take that away. Don't send your Indian."

"Your clerk is not *voyageur* enough to take you through alone," I protested. "Once the Indians learned you were leaving the country, taking the Voice with you, they might do anything."

She walked through the gate, and I followed her. She halted and wearily informed me:

"My father left me to look after the post until some one came. I shall stay. Good-by! You'll get more skins now—just for what you did to that." She nodded toward the fence, behind which Black Chabot was trying to collect his drunken senses.

She was gone by the time he had managed to stagger through the gate. His long black beard was full of blood, a ghastly sight even in the fur country.

"Where is she?" he whispered, glaring about.

"Miss Dearness? She went back to the post to get her father's double-barreled gun. Said something about shooting you on sight."

"I'll tame her, —— her!" he vowed. "A regular red head! But I'll tame her. Come back a purpose to."

"Scarcely worth the game," I carelessly remarked. "A risk is a risk, and danger is a danger, but when she's got all the Chippewas, Crees and Assiniboins believing she's a great tribal medicine, when the whole outfit is willing to murder every white in the Northwest if she gives the word— But what's the use of talking all this to you? You know your own business. You're old enough to take care of yourself."

He combed some of the blood from his beard and stared at his fingers curiously. Slanting his eyes at me, he muttered:

"How did I come to fall? Felt like something was mixed up with my feet—like something hit my head."

His low voice was the danger signal. I was carrying the keg on my left shoulder, the paddle in my right hand. I dropped the keg as if to rest me and shifted the paddle, leaving a hand free to snatch for my knife.

"Looked to me as if your last drink was what got mixed with your legs," I boldly replied.

He combed more blood from his beard and stole murderous glances at me. He knew I had mauled him over the head and he proposed to get even.

"Indians think she is big medicine, you say?"

"Ask any of them," I advised.

He picked up the keg and drank wolfishly; then he made for his canoe and, by some miracle, embarked. In spite of his drams he handled the paddle smartly. I placed the keg in my canoe and followed him. Instead of keeping inshore he swung out into midstream, where he had to contend against the full force of the current.

He had a reason in this, as I soon knew; it was to get a view of the X. Y. post. I trailed him, and we both beheld her standing on the shore, her face turned toward the north, looking down the path her father had taken for the last time. Her hair looked like a torch.

The sight of her seemed to drive him mad. He stood erect and shook his fist at her and raved:

"I'm coming back to get you! It'll even up what I owe Red Dearness, —— him!"

I reached over with my paddle and gave his canoe a shove, and he shot into the water. I had hoped that the rushing of the river had smothered his beastly threat,

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but she must have heard it or at least have sensed it, for I saw her place her cupped hands to her mouth and I caught the long drawn out call. I saw the bush growth move and tremble close by her and heard her call out something in Chippewa. Then Black Chabot's distorted face bobbed above the muddy surface, and I caught his canoe and pushed it to him, holding the stern while he clambered in, swearing between his gasps.

"I'll settle with you for that when we get back to the post," he choked.

"I'm going to kill you when we get out of sight of the young woman," I promised him.

This was not an empty threat. His treatment of the girl left me cold and deliberate in my purpose to have done with him.

Without a word he turned and began paddling up-stream. He had gained a lead of a rod or so when an arrow whipped from the bushes and hissed close to his wet beard. With a yelp and a howl he toppled backward and all but went overboard again. By the time he had scrambled back to his knees a second shaft stuck in the bow of the canoe.

Then came the girl's voice, clear as a bell, warning:

"Tell him he dies unless he goes down-stream at once, Mr. Franklin. Tell him he dies if he comes back here before I have left the country."

I had no need of telling him, for he heard her. Snarling with rage, yet weak with fear, he hesitated, and a third arrow all but got him. The Black Robe, for I knew it must be he, was shooting marvelously straight for one so recently drunk. Howling like some wild animal caught in a trap, he frantically spun his craft about and, hugging the east bank, paddled for his life down-stream, making for the Forks. I watched him till he was out of sight, but did not see any other arrows pursue him.

I half expected the Robe to take a shot at me, but he did not, although he had many opportunities had he so wished. Perhaps it would be better to say had she not forbid his doing so.

I thus closed Black Chabot's career in the Red River country—expelled by a girl with fiery red hair. I had much to ponder over as I fought my way up-stream.

CHAPTER V

THE RIVER SETS A TRAP

THE girl was much in my mind that night and I began to sympathize with her a bit. Not because she had lost her father, as death must come to all and Red Dearness had lived his life and given sympathy to but few. Nor because she was left without a protector, inasmuch as she had impressed me as being quite competent to care for herself. Chabot's flight before Black Robe's hurtling arrows was a token of this fact. My sympathy was more for her youth's being spent in a lonely land—probably a reflection of self-pity. As I dropped off to sleep my last thoughts were of her red head, glowing like a war beacon on that brown river bank.

Flat Mouth was cleaning a string of catfish when I went to the river bank next morning. His manner was preoccupied when he returned my greeting. I lighted my pipe and stared down the river, thinking of her.

The Pillager wiped his knife on a tuft of grass and rose, saying—

"He will not come back here."

He referred to Black Chabot. There was no need of names between us.

"How do you know that?" I asked.

"A very strong medicine will keep him away," he replied, smiling grimly.

"A red medicine," I suggested.

"White man call it 'afraid.' "

"You have heard how he came and went away?"

"My *wabeno* medicine tells me much."

"What else has it told you?"

"The father of the medicine woman is dead," he said.

In some such way did news travel up and down the river, often outspeeding a messenger. You might start post-haste for the hills with news and find it ahead of you when you arrived. The natural inference was that Black Robe had brought word of Chabot's attempted assault on the girl, but the Robe had not put in appearance and, unless he traveled during the night, he could scarcely have arrived before I woke up. That he would paddle day and night was hardly probable.

Of course there would be a flare-back, once Chabot reached Grand Portage, but I was not worried over the outcome. Miss

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Dearness' testimony would offset any charges Chabot could prefer against me. What I had done was for the honor of the N. W. company. The rivalry between my company and the X. Y. was at its height, nearing the point where one must give way or both go down with a smash; neither of us split hairs in overreaching the opposition.

Still, there were things which could not be permitted. The gentlemen of the North did not bother with the morals of their representatives so long as the returns were good. The leisurely procedure of the H. B. company had changed to a frantic endeavor to suppress us, its most powerful rival. Sir Alexander McKenzie, once a partner in the N. W. but now head of the X. Y., was very bitter against Simon McTavish.

With all this bad blood almost anything would be overlooked that gave a trade advantage—but a ruffian attacking a white woman—no! Tell headquarters that so-and-so is taking too many Indian women as wives, and the gentlemen would overhaul the factor's last statement, note how many black, silver, red and cross foxes his sheet showed, or how many beaver and dressed moose, then gravely reply it was for the good of the company's trade relations with the tribes.

We determined a Northman's reputation in terms of beaver, marten, mink, and wolverines, bolstered up by his trade in black, brown and grizzly bears. But all this only when Indians were concerned. To trouble a white woman, especially when she held the unique position of representing the X. Y. company, was a vicious slap at Sir Alexander and his powerful associates. The N. W.—all question of decency aside—had enough trouble without seeking trade in that way.

So I wasn't worried over the final outcome, although I looked for Chabot to spread wild reports about an Indian uprising, with me turning renegade. This would result in the company's rushing a brigade up the Red and relieving me of command, and, doubtless, in sending me under arrest to Grand Portage or Montreal, where I would ultimately be vindicated.

While at the bank watching the Pillager, two canoes came up-stream, containing Bad Ax and White Partridge with their families. White Partridge had kept clear of us since Chabot nearly kicked him to death for stealing a horse. Now Chabot was gone, he was back, anxious to become one of our family. As he had a number of skins I let the past sleep and gave him and the Ax a dram. The Ax had started to hunt moose and red deer on the east side of the Red, but had turned back, he said, as the country was overflowed from the Spring freshets. I knew this to be a lie, as the river had dropped rapidly, and because of the trip the Pillager and I had taken to the Red River district.

It does no good to tell an Indian he lies, so I told the two I would give them tobacco and ammunition if they would take their families and paddle up to the Goose and get beaver. As an additional incentive I promised a big keg if they should return with enough skins to wipe out their debts. They were much disgruntled over two points; they wanted the keg at once, and they did not propose to hunt beaver on the Goose at any time, as it was above the Red Lake country, where they were sure of being gobbled up by the Sioux.

I spoke to Flat Mouth, who disappeared. When he proudly returned he was flourishing the four scalps, now nicely stretched on small hoops. With great relish he inflicted his new song upon them relating our adventures and picturing himself always in the lead and at death grips while I lounged in the rear. The scalps impressed them mightily, and they eagerly offered to trade anything they possessed, even their daughters or wives, in return for some of his war-medicine.

At the risk of spoiling a trade I interrupted the babel to declare there was no need of war-medicine up the river now that the Sioux had gone home, for they would not dare return to the Red until the following Spring.

"And before then, tobacco will be passed among all the Chippewas, Crees and Assiniboins. A great war-party will go after the Sioux and dig them out when the leaves begin to turn yellow and drop off the trees," I added for good measure.

Flat Mouth boasted:

"The Sioux are still running like frightened calves. If one is left behind because he is lame, shout the name of Eshkebugecoshe, war-chief of the Pillager Chippewas, and the lame man will run like a fox to get away."

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They wavered, and I tipped the scales in favor of the trip by giving them another dram and consenting to furnish a gallon of mixed wine for them to take along, the big keg to await their return with a good hunt. I was anxious for them to go, as the beaver signs were unusually good along the Goose, because none of our Indians had dared tarry there and neither the X. Y. or the H. B. had cared to risk establishing a post above us.

Aside from such unvisited streams, beaver was not plentiful in the lower Red River department. The scarcity was not because the animals had been trapped out, but resulted from some disease that had killed off the valuable creatures by thousands. They seemed immune so long as they remained in swift flowing waters, but the colonies in ponds and stagnant waters were wiped out in numbers sufficient to make a Northman's heart ache. They died while at work cutting down trees, in the entrances to their homes and while constructing their little canals.

My Indian hunters had told me this wholesale extermination was to be found all the way to Hudson Bay. Now that Chabot would surely endeavor to prejudice headquarters against me, I was anxious to build the best of defenses—a heavy trade and the exploiting of regions heretofore left practically untouched.

Flat Mouth's medicine and my promises of rum won them to the venture and I had the satisfaction of seeing them on the way with their families, kettles, ammunition and traps.

TAKING the Pillager, I crossed over to the east side of the river and shot three black bears, one on the shore, drinking, and two out of an oak, where they had climbed to escape me. Their fur was prime and the skins very acceptable. I mention the incident to show how easily some of the idlers at the post and the hills could pay off their debts and buy plenty of mixed wine if they would take the trouble.

Black Robe, very penitent and very thirsty, came in the next day and left a moose as a peace offering. He had shot the animal in the river while coming up from the Scratching. I read him a lecture on the awful crime of stealing rum from a white man and showed him the three bears, telling him to take his family and go and do likewise. Of course he wanted rum at the start. I advanced some cloth for his woman, gave him a few inches of tobacco, some powder and balls, and informed him that bear pelts were the only medicine that could get rum from me.

In a final effort to touch my heart or arouse my fears, he told me of meeting Tabashaw in the woods back of our Scratching River post and learning some important news from him. Tabashaw, he wished me to understand, need no longer lean on the white man. I encouraged him to proceed, and, hoping for a drink, he explained:

"Tabashaw came down from the hills to the strong timber. He was three days without eating. While singing his new song a man, dressed like a white man, came to him and told him of many things. This man-spirit told Tabashaw he must not ask the sun to help him when he made feats or new medicines, as he, the man-spirit, the great Kitchimanito, was the father of all life and the only power to help the Chippewas. This great spirit told Tabashaw that the traders did not treat him well, and that he, the great spirit, would give him rum and tobacco and ammunition if he gave his medals back to the traders and have nothing more to do with them. Tabashaw told me all this."

"He is a liar," I scoffed, yet glad to know the old rascal's latest plans for regaining control of the tribe and thereby forcing the traders to grant all his whims.

"Kitchimanito goes everywhere to turn the Indians away from the whites. Tabashaw saw his moccasins worn to pieces by his long travels," persisted Black Robe.

"If you believe him, go to him. Tell him you will not hunt for the traders. If he is not a liar he will give you rum which the man-spirit gave to him," I advised.

The Robe drew a long face and grunted in despair.

"I will take my woman and my children and go and hunt bear," he surrendered.

There were now two long tents of women and children at the post, their active men being away on the hunt. I used these in finishing the planting and in doing odd chores. The day after the Robe crossed the river old Tabashaw arrived. His manner was subdued and he was very humble when he came to me for some new milk.

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"Where is the milk the man-spirit was to give you?" I jeered. "And where are the medals you were to give back to us?"

"I had a bad dream," he muttered, turning away.

His manner was strange. He forgot to threaten me. He wandered apart and placed his *wabeno* drum before him and stared at it gloomily. To draw him out I called him inside the fort and gave him a drink. Even after that his downcast demeanor continued. This was not play-acting. I tried to get him to talk, but he would only say that he had had a bad dream.

The arrival of several hunters, all Chippewas, called me from him. I quickly observed these were sullen and uneasy about something. I traded their skins and gave them rum and sought to set their tongues to wagging, but, like their chief, they remained moody and taciturn. The situation began to get on my nerves. The Indians were children. Ordinarily it was very simple to learn their intentions, despite their expressionless features, but to get behind their thoughts it was necessary to make them talk. So long as the chief and the hunters sat in gloomy silence I could learn nothing, while my imagination pictured all sorts of disagreeable events about to happen.

Anxious to get at the truth, I went after Flat Mouth. I despaired when I observed that even this intelligent and—with me—very frank fellow was sobered almost to the point of dejection. At first he would make no reply to my questions.

"My friend, the great war-chief of the Pillagers, looks sad when four Sioux scalps hang in his tent. And he refuses to tell his white brother, who would drive the shadows away," I complained.

"My brother can not drive the shadows away," he grunted.

"Medicine is strong."

"Was it strong enough to bring the Voice here from the River That Calls?"

I knew I had it. By indirection I had learned what a month of cross-examination would not have told me.

"Flat Mouth is sad because the Voice has gone back to its home on the Qu' Appelle," I boldly stated.

Assuming I knew all about it, he said—

"It has gone back. The woman with the medicine hair sent it back."

Old Tabashaw's gloomy bearing and the depression of the hunters was now easily understood.

"That is why your people are so sad even when they have new milk," I said.

"It was great *wabeno* medicine while it was with us," he regretted.

"How do the Chippewas feel toward the woman?"

"They are very angry, but they are very afraid of her."

"They would like to have her scalp nailed to a tent pole," I suggested.

"They are afraid to go near her. No one dares harm her."

"No one can harm her," I cried. "She is mighty medicine. She called the Voice here. She has sent it back. She can call it again when she will."

This possibility caused his eyes to glisten.

"I will tell my people, so their hearts will not be hard against her," he said, rising and making for the stockade.

The result of Flat Mouth's interview with his friends was soon apparent. Tabashaw began beating his drum and the hunters found much vivacity in their wine. Scarcely had this improvement taken place when two tents of Crees and two of Assiniboins brought in their hunt. Their arrival was marked with poorly veiled hostility toward the Chippewas, and yet they seemed striving to hide elation. They eyed the Chippewas askance and kept their bows and arrows in their hands and camped by themselves.

This was unusual, as the three tribes ordinarily fraternized when meeting at the posts. The weaker party during a drinking-match usually desires to keep its weapons close at hand, but this precaution is taken to protect them against the effects of the rum, rather than because of any tribal antipathy. To be on their guard when not in liquor had an ugly look.

"What's the matter with you?" I demanded of a Cree. "You act as if you had passed war-tobacco with the Assiniboins against my Chippewas? What do you mean?"

"We are afraid of the Chippewas. Our hearts are warm toward Tabashaw and his people, but their hearts are black against us," he replied.

"Why should you fear the Chippewas?"

"The Voice is back on the River That

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Calls. The Chippewas are sad and angry at losing their medicine. They will trade no more skins at the X. Y."

"What about your trade?"

"We bring our hunt here. The Medicine-Hair told us we could have no new milk. We can get milk here."

"You took your hunt there when you could not get milk," I reminded.

"That was when she had the Voice. Now it is back on the river we come here."

"See that you are very careful what you do, or the Medicine Hair will take the Voice away from you," I warned. "If any of you have not paid your debts to the X. Y., take your furs and do it, or she will be angry."

It seemed that one hunter did owe the X. Y. a debt, and as a result of my talk with the Cree he was made to do up his skins and hold them out of the trade with the N. W. This was scarcely good policy when the rival companies were bending every energy to get the best of each other, but I had passed my word to her. She had meant it when she said I should receive more furs—that she would let the trade come to me because of what I did to Chabot. Royal pay for a slight service, but somehow there was scant consolation in it. It was like having an opponent clearly demonstrate he can defeat you at your own game and then quit playing from weariness or some whim.

Could I have secured the trade with rum, leaving her hands empty despite her taking advantage of the Indians' superstitions, I should have felt much better. However, the trade continued coming in, with very little going to the X. Y., and the bulk of that returning down-river because I refused to buy from a hunter in debt to my rival.

THE monotony of refusing, then judiciously dealing out drams; of threatening, then cajoling the hunters, wore on me. My thoughts were too much given to wandering down the river. I gave too much time in picturing the woman. I resented her attitude of aloofness. After all, we were both young and of the same race. Even though we were trade rivals, there was no reason why, as human beings, we should not see each other and enjoy each other's company.

I was decently spoken, having a far better education than many Northmen. I was born and brought up in the East and was familiar with New York and other Atlantic cities, as well as with Montreal and Quebec. The Hudson Bay was a persistent rival; yet there were times when the heads of departments declared a truce and exchanged civilities. I've seen Mr. Henry open a keg of brandy and share it with an H. B. factor, the two of them getting quite merry and performing with much zest on the fife and drum, and we have taken packs down to the Forks for them and have granted and received like favors from the X. Y.

It was while securing furs that we nipped each other—often till blood flowed. All of which means I was uneasy in spirit and ashamed to admit even to myself that I wanted to see that wonderful red hair again.

I tried to believe my mental depression was due to my desire to be employed in the American fur trade, I being born an American. This was a silly deception to attempt, as there was no American company to hire me. To be a Northman one must go to the great Northwest and hire out to one of the three companies I have named.

Months later, I was to learn that a scant two months behind me the door had been opened to American adventurers, when the Stars and Stripes were hoisted over St. Louis on the tenth of March, marking the transfer of the magnificent Louisiana territory to the United States. But many a long trail was to be traveled before I could return East and hear how the flags of Spain, of France and of the United States flew over St. Louis, all within twenty-four hours.

There was no escaping the fact that the girl was in my mind and was bothering me. Then, suddenly, came the chilling fear that she might be gone. I had refrained from going down the river. Her attitude had not been friendly. She wanted to be alone. Very well, I had haughtily told myself, it should be as she wished—then the dread lest she had been relieved.

Once the X. Y. people learned of her father's death, they would lose no time in shifting a man from the Assiniboin to the Scratching to permit her leaving the river before cold weather set in. The idea became fixed in my mind and tormented me. She was buying no skins; there was no excuse for her remaining. If a Summer man was not sent out, then Angus could

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look after the post, and I was booked for the Summer and Winter—a whole year—without another opportunity of looking on a white woman.

It wasn't love for her that called me, I stoutly told myself; for I knew we could not exchange a half dozen sentences without quarreling. But she was a white woman, the only one in the department. She aroused my resentment, and yet I was miserable for wanting to see her.

At last I ceased trying to fool myself and made for the river. I would canoe down to the Scratching, make an errand of looking over our post and at least get a glimpse of her, if she had not already departed from the country. I found the Rat talking earnestly with Flat Mouth, and his presence aggravated my fears. Addressing him in Chippewa to provoke a more voluble flow of language, I asked—

"What is the Red Hair doing?"

"She makes ready to go away," he replied.

My heart gave a jump.

"When does she go down the river?" I carelessly inquired.

"Up, not down," he corrected.

I scowled at him, thinking he was lying to me. He eagerly explained:

"She goes to make discoveries in the Red Lake River country. She thinks to send hunters there."

"She can get no hunters," I sneered.

"She thinks she can get some Crees, some Assiniboins," he retorted.

I began to believe that she could. All she need do would be to threaten a second theft of the Voice from the Qu' Appelle. I began to feel normal, to look on her as a rival whom I must best in trade.

"Is she going herself?"

"She takes a guide—maybe a family of Crees."

"When does she go?"

"She did not tell me. She talks with no one."

"But you should know if you go with her. Would a deep dram of strong milk make you remember?"

He groaned at his misfortune and replied:

"I do not go with her, so I do not know. She asked me, but it is too near the Summer war-path of the Sioux."

"Flat Mouth, chief of the Pillager Chippewas, has scared the Sioux back to their holes," scornfully cried my Indian. Then to my amazement, "I go with the Medicine Hair."

"Did the Rat come to hire you?" I sharply demanded. The Rat drew away, looking very uncomfortable. Flat Mouth readily admitted—

"She knows I am a great warrior."

"—— it! She doesn't make any bones of hiring my men, it seems!" And my resentment grew very strong.

"Her hair is great medicine. She calls the Voice. It comes. She tells it to go to sleep. It is gone. I go with her," calmly answered the chief.

This hiring of my man was a most serious affront. It was a trick for which only a woman's logic would find an excuse. A man might do it, but he would provide some shadow of an excuse. She was going about it openly, ignoring my wishes. The worst of all was my inability to restrain the chief. He had said he would go, and there was no stopping him. The devil was in that woman's hair if it were strong enough to bind Flat Mouth to her service.

Hot with the indignity she had put upon me, I walked back to the fort. After the first flush of anger had exhausted itself, I discovered my state of mind was wofully twisted. I was glad, in a sneaking fashion, that she was not on her way to the Forks.

Her cool impudence in securing a guide at the post without even asking my leave somehow hinted at the eternal feminine, a quality I had stedfastly refused to detect in her. It was good to think I might see her again, even if only to reproach her for her insolence; I could not get over the conviction that it was decidedly raw for her to send the Rat to hire my best Indian. I could not forgive her going over my head in that fashion. Did a man wish to borrow the Pillager, he would offer me some skins as a bonus. Being a woman, she quietly appropriated what she desired. It wounded my self-esteem, and yet prolonged meditation brought me to the point where I could appreciate the irony of it and grin a bit.

I had wild thoughts of trying to talk Flat Mouth out of the trip, but retained sense enough to know that such an effort would be about as successful as to attempt conversation with a wounded buffalo bull.

He was the best of his complexion I ever met. At times you would forget he was an Indian. But superstition could drive him every which way. He liked me. He

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enjoyed many privileges because I both liked and trusted him. We had been friends. Yet, without a word of warning, he was to leave me and guide a rival to one of the few remaining beaver localities, and all because of some red hair.

I grinned more broadly, although sardonically. Her lack of logic grimly amused me now; perhaps because it revealed the woman in her. How fiercely she had upbraided me for following the time-honored custom of trading rum for pelts—a custom that was followed from Hudson Bay to the Willamett. Then she deliberately stole a man without even a "thank you," or "by your leave."

I sternly told myself she needed taming. I found the Rat and asked him—

"When do you go back to the Scratching?"

"At once, unless I am asked to stop for a dram. It is very dry at the post and I am very thirsty. My throat is like the prairie after the fires have scorched it."

"Come inside! You shall have a dram, and a keg to take back with you," I promised.

"New milk is good," he murmured, his mouth watering. "I will take a dram. Let the keg wait for me here, till after the woman goes up the river."

I assured him the liquor would be held in trust for him. He confessed that she was making life miserable for him and Angus by refusing them liquor.

"After she is gone, the clerk and I will have a big drunk," he gloated.

"Then why do you stay with her? I will make it a big keg for you two. Why not come up here? I will hire both you and Angus. If a man behaves he can have plenty of rum here."

He sadly shook his head and drifted into French as he answered:

"It is to be wished, to be prayed for—the beautiful rum! But I would be cursed. A bad sign would be on me."

"Bah! She has made you believe such foolishness?"

"She says nothing. If I went and told her I was leaving the post, she would say nothing. She does not seem to know I am at the post. Since her father died, her eyes look very far away. I do not want to stay, yet I know it would bring me bad luck to leave her. After she goes up the river I will call for the keg—the big keg."

"You will start down the river at once," I directed. "You will stop at the mouth of the Reed and find Probos. Tell him I say for him to come up here at once. He is not to bring the Indians. He will stay here for a few days."

The Rat readily promised to carry my message, downed his dram and returned to the canoe and set off. I waited till he was out of sight and then attempted to pump Flat Mouth. The chief did not seem to know just when his services would be required. I got the notion he was evading me. I knew it would be useless to press him.

THAT night I had a stroke of luck. One of the Red Sucker band dropped down the river and brought me five wonderful white buffalo skins, four of them young bulls slain in January below Grandes Fourches, and one, a calf, killed recently. The hair on the bulls was like that of sheep—fleecy and soft and all white. The calfskin was white except for a black spot encircling the right eye. The Chippewas prize these white robes and skins only for what they will bring in trade, but there are other tribes, especially those on the Missouri, which will barter any of their possessions to secure one.

So I called it a stroke of luck, my getting them; for I planned to use them to the great advantage of the N. W. company before I quit the country. The Indian said he had seen no sign of Sioux, that he had talked with my two hunters on the Goose, and that they were taking beaver.

The story of our victory over the Sioux—rather Flat Mouth's victory, for he was being given all the credit—had spread throughout the country with that celerity with which news ever travels in the wilds. It was taken for granted that, after such a rebuff, the Sioux would not travel north on another path until Spring. They would be sure to expect the Chippewas, emboldened by the great coup, to venture south and seek a second victory.

Probos came in due season and I manufactured excuses to keep him, but it was two days after his arrival that I got up one morning to find Flat Mouth had gone. No one seemed to know when he departed. Old Tabashaw, I suspected, had an inkling of the Pillager's engagement, for he performed on his drum with sullen zeal, as

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if sending his medicine after some one he feared. He sang, without giving any names, and called on the Great Mystery to revenge the Chippewas.

I knew I held a thread to the puzzle in the ten-gallon keg of high wine I intended to present to the Rat and Angus. Depositing the liquor on the bank and seating myself beside it, I waited. An hour of impatience and then the nose of a canoe scraped the willows on the west bank, announcing the arrival of the Rat. From the slack water under the willows he spied on the landing-place before the fort, then scanned the upper reaches of the river and propelled his light craft forward.

"When did she pass the post?" I asked, kicking the keg toward him.

"About the middle of the night," he replied, tenderly setting the wine in his canoe. "The clerk stands on the bank before the fort, his tongue hanging out like a blown bull's, waiting for me to come back."

"You followed her?"

"Not too close. I timed myself to arrive here after sunrise. Ran the canoe into a sunken tree in the night and dared not try to shove off till light came. At the speed she was paddling, I know she must have passed here in the night."

"Flat Mouth has gone. Did he know when she was coming?"

"Yes, she was to sound her call, if she came in the night. He was to be waiting for her."

"Did she bring any Indians with her?"

"She came alone."

I swore and wished I had made it a smaller keg. The rascal had said nothing about Miss Dearness' plans to make a signal to the Pillager.

"I thought he would tell you," he artlessly remarked, sending his canoe into midstream with a deft sweep of the paddle.

"Do you know where they go first?" I called after him.

"To the mouth of Riviere du Lac Rouge where the war road of the Sioux ends. Where the Sioux wait many days when watching for Chippewa hunters to come down the Thief, the Clearwater and the Wild Rice Rivers."

Thanks to the fear my double-barreled gun had instilled in the Sioux, the woman and her guide would be free from any danger even if they passed the mouth of the Red Lake River and proceeded so far south even, as the mouth of the Cheyenne.

Now that I knew they were only twelve hours ahead I was undecided as to what I should do. I had called Probos from the Reed, intending to follow them. Now, face to face with the business, I weakened. I had no warrant to follow her. She did not wish my company. She had planned to pass the post in the night so that I might not know of her presence. This was not because of any trade delicacy on her part, as she had not scrupled to hire my best man to guide her. If she wished to avoid me, what an awkward situation I would be in should I follow and find her.

I set Probos to work to arrange a place for the season's hay, some three thousand bundles if we had luck; then I developed great energy in having defective stockade posts of poplar replaced by some of oak. In truth, for nearly an hour I was desperately busy trying to make myself believe I had washed her and her red head out of mind. Could Simon McTavish have dropped in and witnessed my industry, he surely would have appointed me to head an important department.

My artificial zeal died as abruptly as does an Indian's rum-courage. Leaving the work on the stockade to take care of itself, I walked moodily down to the river and thought of that other river, Qu' Appelle—Who Calls—and in my fancy I heard her calling—this woman with the red hair. She had called in passing the post and the Pillager had heard her. I almost wished there were danger from the Sioux, so I could use it as an excuse for setting out after her. Above all else, I did not care to appear foolish in her eyes. I was positive she repelled me. I took great satisfaction in telling myself this, and yet I fidgeted around, seeking a reason for following her.

This attempt to fool myself soon gave way before a satisfactory purpose. I would deceive her. I would go up the river and encounter her, but I would have a legitimate errand and our meeting should appear to be the work of chance.

Once I cast aside all pretenses and squarely admitted I would make an errand to take me after her, the way became easy. There were the white robes. I would pack them in my canoe and stalk her until I knew she and her guide had entered the

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mouth of Red Lake River; then I would turn in after them, pretending I had come down the river, where I had traded for the skins.

Flat Mouth would understand this was some subterfuge of mine but he would never tell her. The scheme tickled my fancy. I would display surprize on overtaking her. I would pretend I thought I was following two of my hunters. Naturally I would exhibit displeasure at her hiring the Pillager. Whether we got along or quarreled, I would stimulate fear of the Sioux and stay by her down the river.

Procuring the skins and baling them neatly, I put them with my gun in the canoe, together with tobacco and a hook and line—the men were now taking many fish on the line. With a final word to Probos to look after things until I returned, and a stern command that he should give out no liquor, I started on my eccentric journey.

I was much ashamed of myself, for I feared I was weak; somehow, though, I was brazenly contented with the thought that I should soon see her. I passed the mouth of the Park at sunset. A short distance beyond, I came to a dead fire and the bones of several catfish, showing where they had paused to eat. There were two canoes and she was doing her own paddling. I kindled a fire, caught some fish and made my camp there.

NOTHING broke the monotony of the river until I reached the Big Salt and began paddling by the long slough which extends from that stream to the Turtle River. I was marveling at the immense number of wild-fowl in the marsh and was tempted to recharge my gun with light shot and bag a few, when several birds at the river bank rose in the air. I ceased paddling and rested my gun across my knees and closely watched the surface of the tall grass, wondering what had alarmed the fowl.

It was not my approach, for the countless numbers feeding abreast of me had not taken fright. While I was debating the problem, the birds began rising far down toward the Turtle, a vast cloud of them, which gradually spread and covered the entire slough as the fear radiated. The first to take flight seemed to draw others up after them as the sun sucks up the vapors in the early morning. In a minute the heavens were in a furious commotion.

Paddling cautiously, I glided along close to the bank, my gaze sweeping the shore at the mouth of the Turtle. The tall reeds a short distance ahead became alive with motion, and, with a twist of the paddle, I was backing into cover.

A canoe darted out, filled with women and children, the former bowing low and paddling frantically. They were closely followed by a second canoe, likewise holding women and children. A few rods behind the second came a third canoe, and in this I recognized Bad Ax and White Partridge.

As they bore down-stream those who were not paddling kept a constant watch to the rear. It was plain that my hunters were afraid of something and, with their families, were fleeing down the river.

The warriors, as was proper, brought up the rear, to stave off death and permit their women and little ones to escape. I have never known this trait to fail of expression in the Indian. He may kill his wife when drunk, or brutally disfigure her, but in event of an enemy attack there is none so cowardly as not to take the fighting position in the rear. I waited until the two canoes of women passed, then drove my craft across the course of the warriors and held up my hand and called out my name.

With a powerful sweep of their paddles they swerved wide to run by me and yelped something I could not understand. Turning my canoe down-stream, I laid to the paddle and drove alongside of them until the canoes locked. White Partridge was in the stern. I grabbed his shoulder and forced him to desist paddling until he had explained his flight.

He turned a face on me that was distorted with terror and gasped out "Sioux!" and tried to cast off my hand.

"You saw red deer," I cried. "There are no Sioux on the war road since we killed them at the mouth of the Thief."

"Bad Ax saw them creeping through the woods on the east bank of the Red just below our camp on the Goose," he cried, his teeth chattering.

"He lied to you! He wanted to get back to the post and get rum," I said. "He is a lazy dog."

"We saw their horses!" protested Bad Ax over his shoulder. "We counted them.

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There were so many." And he opened and closed his left hand until he had indicated thirty. "I had crossed to the east bank after a bear. I came upon them in the woods. They did not see me. I was very near. Some were making new moccasins. Some were sticking willow sticks in the ground and painting their faces. Some were creeping to the river—right toward me!"

The recollection caused him to give a little yelp and redouble his efforts at the paddle. White Partridge took up the tale and said:

"There were ten warriors left with the horses. They left all their horses on the west bank. They will kill every one on the river."

He now succeeded in jerking himself free of my grip, and, with the two paddles working as one, they sped after their families, leaving me to chew over the problem.

IT WAS the canoes of my hunters, hiding in the edge of the marsh, that had frightened the wild-fowl. If any of the Sioux were within miles of the slough they knew by this time that something was moving on the river which might repay them for investigating. I hastened to withdraw from midstream to the shelter of the rushes and reeds.

I had not had time to ask the hunters if they had seen anything of Flat Mouth and the woman. I believed they had not seen them, or else they would have mentioned the fact; or, rather, the Pillager and Miss Dearness would be returning with them.

Then I angrily declared there could be no Sioux. Aside from the startled waterfowl, scared by my hunters, there wasn't a hostile sign to be discovered up or down the river. Bad Ax had heard a noise in the woods, probably that made by the red deer as they passed along in single file over one of their many paths, feeding. His timid imagination had transformed the unseen into Sioux warriors.

White Partridge had wandered from the river to the edge of the plains. He had seen deer at a distance. The stories of the two men had frightened the wits out of their women. Scarcely a week during the Spring and Fall but what Indians were racing down the river, spreading alarms which amounted to nothing. The shadow was always over them, and the least excuse for a panic was quickly acted upon.

Still, I would have felt easier in my mind if Bad Ax' tally of the warriors on the east bank, and the Partridge's count of the horses on the west bank, guarded by ten warriors, had not squared up so nicely. Neither of the men was in a mood which would permit calculation. The number of horses agreed with the number of warriors.

Quitting my shelter, I resumed my journey south with rapid strokes, eager to make the mouth of the Red Lake River. Should there be any truth in the Chippewas' alarm, and had the enemy unaccountably returned to spread along both banks of the river, then the girl was in danger.

Once more I caught an agitation among the reeds and grass on my side of the river. Knowing that all the Goose River Indians had passed me, I drove my canoe into cover for the second time. Once in the swamp growth, I could see but little. A rod in front, flowed the river; as for the rest, I had to depend upon my ears.

Five minutes passed, I estimated, before I heard a *flap-flap* at the edge of the river where it merges with the rank growth of the slough. With the gun ready to be cocked and discharged, I pulled my knife and waited.

The commotion drew nearer until it was nearly abreast of me. Whatever it was, it was in the clear water but close to the reeds. It turned into the marsh grass in the path left by my canoe and I laughed aloud in relief as I glimpsed the long, gray neck, twisting like a serpent, and the flapping wing.

It was a swan, disabled by mink or some other wild thing, and it was floundering along most awkwardly. I sat very quietly while the bird worked its way nearer the canoe. The grass permitted of only occasional glimpses, and I saw it was likely to blunder full against the canoe. With much splashing it came through the last thin barrier, its head moving from side to side in a curious way.

Like the jab of a red-hot knife-blade I remembered my loud laughter which should have frightened the bird away. Its neck—it was never still. I fastened my gaze on the head and followed it back and forth until I discovered the eyes were dead. It grazed against the boat and at the same

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moment I droye the butt of my gun down on the feathery mass.

Instantly a brown hand shot up and gripped the side of the canoe with the lithe quickness of a water-snake. Before the canoe could be capsized I had seized the hand and was hanging over the opposite side, my free right hand holding my hunting-knife.

The body of the swan toppled to one side, revealing the head of a Sioux hideous with war-paint. As our eyes met, his left hand came up with an ax and he opened his lips to sound his yell of discovery. But, as the body of the swan fell and uncovered him, I pulled on his hand, propelling myself toward him before he could use the ax, and drove my knife through his neck.

For a moment he stood there, his lips parted for the yell and only bloody froth coming through them. He sought to strike with the ax and hit the gunwale a feeble blow. I released him with a shove and with both hands thrown above his head he settled back into the muddy water and sank from sight.

I CROUCHED low in the canoe, expecting that the sound of our struggle would bring more of the enemy. The slough seemed calm enough; the water-fowl were returning to feed; the river just ahead of me flowed on serenely. My nerves grew quiet and I sensed the stench of a dead buffalo stranded somewhere near by. The stench grew intolerable and I edged my canoe forward through the last fringe of grass and glanced up and down the river. Above my position, a moose was climbing the eastern bank, having swum across. Dipping softly, I crept up-stream.

Before coming to the mouth of the Turtle I turned toward the east bank and crossed at my best speed, darting like an arrow under the low-hanging willow boughs. I reconnoitered from this position and found the river's banks quiet enough.

Not satisfied, I left the canoe and crawled up the bank and advanced some distance south, seeking signs of the Sioux. At almost every rod I aroused red deer from among the willows. At last I realized that the Sioux, if in that neighborhood, would do the same and thus give me warning of their approach.

Returning to my canoe, confident no menace was stalking me on the east bank, I paddled up the river, giving almost all my attention to the west bank. I camped that night a few miles below the mouth of Red Lake River and was nearly devoured by mosquitoes. I dared not make a smudge and could only pull my white robes over my head and endure it.

Two hours before sunrise I was afloat again, gliding up the silent river and giving my attention to the beaches, which were beginning to appear as the water lowered. There were no signs in the muck, that I could find, that would indicate the passage of a war party from bank to bank. On arriving at the mouth of the Red Lake River, as wide as the Red at that point, I swerved inshore and remained quiet for an hour before daring to proceed.

Once above the mouth, I beached my canoe on the east bank and had not stolen along three rods before I came to signs which substantiated Bad Ax' story. Fully a score of savages had crossed the river at this point, with no return trail showing.

Moving inland, I managed to follow the trail through a grove of strong timber and much prickly ash until it led me back to the Red Lake River only a short distance above its junction with the Red.

This was a favorite hiding-place for Sioux war parties. It was famous for sturgeon, many being found during the Winter. Red deer, bear, moose and buffalo abounded, while the wild-fowl could never be counted. From this spot the Sioux could watch for hunters coming down from the Red Lake country, or from the Goose and other upper tributaries of the Red.

Within quarter of a mile from where I struck the river I came upon some huts of elm bark, such as the Sioux build when on the war-path. These huts were a season old and must have accommodated fully a hundred men. I looked them over carefully and failed to find any fresh signs. I noted many poles used in stretching beaver, showing they had combined business with pleasure.

Except for the Indian I had killed at the edge of the slough and the tracks in the mud, I had found nothing to indicate there was a Sioux in the country. If I had not met Bad Ax and White Partridge by accident, I should have walked or paddled right into their arms. Even now they might be watching me from any point.

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Skirting the huts and warily keeping to cover, I followed up the Red Lake River and observed that I no longer scared up red deer. A few miles behind me, and on the same bank, the woods were full of them. The coming of the enemy had driven them away.

A short distance above the huts I came upon some little sticks, painted with vermilion. These were fresh signs and such as Sioux war parties left wherever they paused to renew their war paint. I counted the sticks and they tallied with the tracks in the mud. A score of the devils were on my side of the river, and it was a miracle that Bad Ax could have discovered them and retreated without being seen and slain.

A more disturbing thought was that Miss Dearness and Flat Mouth were in that immediate vicinity. It looked mighty bad for the girl. If already caught, a quick death was the kindest fate I could wish for her. The thought of her glorious hair flapping at a Sioux bridle made a madman of me for the time being. I forgot to be cautious and prowled through the woods with red lights always flashing before my eyes.

THE undergrowth directly ahead of me gave way before incautious steps; my head cleared suddenly. I drew aside from the deer path and stood close by the river, intending to discharge one barrel of my gun and drop under the bank to seek a hole among the roots of one of the giant elms, where I could reload. The slight noises were repeated, and I now caught the sound of labored breathing. I was puzzled that a Sioux should display exhaustion. The berry bushes swayed and parted. I raised my gun, and caught a glimpse of disheveled red hair. I lowered my gun and she staggered toward me, one hand pressed to her side, her blue eyes contracted with pain.

She did not see me until almost upon me. Her gaze widened in surprize, questioned, and then lighted with hope. She could not speak. I sprang to her side, passed my left arm around her waist and felt her splendid arm thrown about my neck. Her hot breath was in my face as I bowed my head and whispered—

"They're on your trail."

She nodded and swallowed convulsively, not from fear but from exhaustion.

"Have they got Flat Mouth?" I murmured.

She lifted her head to listen; I did likewise. Off to one side rang out the scalp cry of the Pillager Chippewa. She smiled wearily and choked—

"Leading them off my trail."

"Don't try to talk," I whispered. "I have a canoe back on the river. We must reach it. If we can get out into the open we may stand them off."

"—after me?" was all I caught of her low query.

"But they haven't got you yet," I comforted.

She frowned and laboriously corrected—

"No; you came—after me?"

"Of course," I answered, inclined to be impatient at time wasted on what was perfectly obvious.

She caught at her throat with her free hand and I saw she was nearly choked with thirst. At the risk of being overtaken, I relinquished my hold about her waist and slipped down the bank, bringing back my hat filled with water. Her eyes lighted with thankfulness. She swallowed some and poured the rest over her face. I made to go for more but she took my arm and warned—

"No time."

Encouraging her to lean on me, I began the retreat. The path was narrow and encroached upon by the bushes. Two could not walk it abreast without betraying themselves. I gave her my gun and, picking her up, ran for it. Concealment was impossible, as our feet had left tracks any Sioux would read at a glance, and more than once we had advertised ourselves by rustling the bushes. Either the enemy was not within hearing or else he was already pressing after us. She murmured a protest at my reckless pace and, as I set her on her feet to get my second wind, I briefly explained that it made no difference.

"Then let me walk," she said.

"Faster my way," I said, taking her up in my arms.

This time I did not stop until back within sound of the Red River's voice. Then I let her walk behind me while I advanced to the bank and hunted for my canoe. We had come out almost upon it.

I jumped down the bank and, turning, caught her as she came after me.

"The Indian? He was very brave—led

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them away—but not all of them," she gasped.

The bank reached above my head. Stepping on a rock, I secured a view of our back trail for a short distance.

A lithe figure, bounding along with the elasticity and silence of a *loup-cervier*, suddenly popped into the foreground. He was the first of her trailers. The upper half of his face was painted red and looked like a mask of blood through which the small black eyes glittered ferociously. Shoving my gun through the dead grass, I gave him the right barrel and he went down with no time to sound his death howl.

Shoving off the canoe, I lifted her into it and gave her the paddle, directing—

"Down-stream while I reload!"

"The Indian?"

"He must take care of himself—down-stream!"

"No, across!"

She pointed to several Sioux now breaking cover on the bank below us. As I beheld them, they gained the river's edge and stood ready to swim out should we attempt to descend.

"Across it must be!" I agreed, kneeling in the stern and reloading.

The Indians below us began shooting arrows, which flew wild, as the wind was strong from the south.

I held my fire until one of the Sioux waded waist-deep into the river and prepared to aim a gun. The weapon was a London Fusil, a number of which had trickled into the Sioux country through the hands of traders, and I have seen a savage do very efficient work with one. I gave him a barrel and he went under, taking his gun with him. The others scrambled for cover.

The girl now sounded the bell-like call which the Chippewas believed she had stolen from the Qu' Apelle and had given back. As the last note died away, the Chippewa scalp-yell rang out from the bank above us and a slim figure burst from the timber, taking to the river in a head-dive.

"The Pillager!" I yelled.

A volley of arrows hissed from the woods behind us, and one ripped a hole in the stern, through which the river began to gurgle most menacingly. More warriors had arrived and several were holding knives between their teeth, intending to swim after us. The group below also reappeared. The pursuit was to be pressed in force.

I could easily have bagged two of them, but I must keep one shot in reserve. I contented myself with catching the first man to slide down the bank. At the same moment a dark hand came out of the water and gripped the canoe. I raised the gun to smash the fingers, but the girl poked me with the paddle, crying—

"The Chippewa!"

Sure enough, it was Flat Mouth. He grinned up into my face sardonically and endeavored to give his yell of triumph, but a mouthful of water stopped him.

"We're sinking!" I told him.

He struck off for the opposite bank, swimming abreast of us and watching our progress with much concern.

I crowded my knee against the hole and reloaded. My last shot had driven the Sioux to cover, but now they were popping up all along the bank. Below and above us several had taken to the water, thinking to head us off while our attention was held by the fire of those directly behind us.

Flat Mouth threw himself half out of the water and raised his fiendish howl of triumph. There was no mistaking the fact that he had made his kill, for a ghastly bunch of fresh hair was caught through the rawhide lacing of his skin shirt.

Arrows and an occasional ball followed us. Above and below bobbed the heads of the swimmers. Our approach to the west bank was very slow and the canoe grew sluggish. I tried to bail with my hat but nearly lost my gun overboard. The craft settled slowly but steadily. I glanced forward and decided we could ground her nose before she filled.

Flat Mouth gave a bark of warning and dived. The situation above, below and behind us remained about the same. I turned toward the west bank and the girl gave a little muffled cry, yet held steadily on. Ten or a dozen of the enemy were crouching in the grass at the top of the bank ready to receive us. These were the Indians left to guard the horses.

"I want to thank you for what you've done for me," the girl called over her shoulder.

"Don't thank me until I've pulled you out of this," I growled, raising my gun.

"You said back there you came after me.

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Did you, or was it just chance?"

"I came after you, to help you," I replied, staring at the top of the bank.

"Your sense of duty—I'm sorry," she sighed.

"—— duty!" I cried. "I didn't know you were in any danger when I started. I came because I couldn't help it. It looks bad for us. I'll be honest with you—with myself."

There's never any understanding a woman; which is not surprizing, as she does not understand herself. Logically she should have been twice as sorry on learning I had followed her without suspecting I was running into danger. Instead she quietly called over her shoulder—

"Now I'm glad. Don't let them take me alive."

"Of course not." That was why I had taken pains to reserve one barrel of my gun.

THE canoe now was very low in the water. She paddled gently and we crept closer to the bank. Then, with a muscular swing, she sent us into the mud with the water up to our waists. The Indians on the bank jumped from cover. I blew a hole through the leader. Flat Mouth came out of the water as if shot by a gun, was half-way up the bank, had cut a fellow's throat and was yanking off the squirming skunk's hair quicker than you could skin a partridge.

CHAPTER VI

BESIEGED

THE sudden appearance of Flat Mouth from the River and his fierce charge up the bank, perhaps, had as much to do with the Indians' failure to press the attack as did my gun. Their hesitation gave us an inch of room and, while I reloaded, the Pillager snatched up a dead warrior's bow and two quivers of arrows and, sheltered by the bank, began firing rapidly. The Indians scattered and ran to escape his shafts. While this was happening Miss Dearness secured the pack of white robes from the submerged canoe and threw me two and two to the chief and draped the fifth over her arm to serve as a shield.

The Sioux ahead of us had lost two of their number, and while they could have smothered us in a rush, had they remained instead of fleeing, they knew the victory would cost them dear. Ducking and dodging, they picked up their discarded shields of bull-hide. This retreat on the part of the enemy was to be commended from their point of view, as the Indians crossing the river would soon be landing above and below us. Then we would be hemmed in and they could kill us at their leisure.

With the canoe out of commission and the water road closed, there remained but one course—to attack at the weakest point. In other words, go ahead. The fewest warriors opposed us and with them were the horses of the entire war party.

"We must have horses!" I cried to Flat Mouth in Chippewa.

"Good cover here," grunted the Pillager, motioning for me to climb up the bank and survey the plain.

I joined him and saw that the growth on the river several hundred yards below us extended some distance into the plain.

I called to the girl to follow. Four savages were cautiously approaching the bank, depending on their shields, while their mates ran to procure some of the horses. Flat Mouth snatched up the white hides and held them before him with his left hand and ran toward the enemy. They began to fall back, shooting their arrows wildly. I gave Miss Dearness a hand, took my robes and fell in behind her to guard the rear. I had nothing but admiration for her coolness as we made for the woods, for she bothered to pick up the arrows the Sioux were wasting.

Once she turned to me and held up a knife she had picked up beside the two dead devils down the bank, and cried out—

"Use both barrels if you have to." Meaning that if the worst came she would kill herself to escape capture.

The four Sioux refused to dispute Flat Mouth's advance and began falling back. Either the white robes worried them, being big medicine, or else they believed they had the game in their own hands and could afford to wait. Suddenly they turned and ran zigzag toward the horses. This behavior puzzled me. I glanced behind me, but as yet none of the Indians had mounted the bank. We were advancing obliquely toward the woods.

Now Flat Mouth called on us to hurry and turned to make cover along the shortest line. Miss Dearness ceased hunting arrows and ran like a deer. I pounded along at her

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heels, with no immediate danger visible and yet realizing that a crisis must be at hand, else the Pillager would not flee so precipitately.

He slowed up so that the girl and I caught up with him.

"Big medicine!" he exulted.

"The robes?" I panted.

"They sent the Sioux running away like old women!" And although we needed to conserve our breath he halted and indulged in a long drawn-out howl of triumph.

There was no doubt now in my mind as to the effect of the robes. While an albino buffalo counted only as a hide among the Indians in the Red River department, the skins were objects of reverence among the tribes on the Missouri. The possessor of one was most fortunate. He was destined to be successful in the hunt, on the war-path, and in his accumulation of wives. He would part with his dearest belongings to secure such a robe.

Their value was so high that often the price was beyond any individual. When one was infrequently put on sale the village would undertake to purchase it. The robe was then cut into strips, and each contributor to the fund received a portion. Even a narrow width of the hide would guarantee good luck to a lodge.

Believing all this, it was natural they should view our five hides as a stupendous display of mighty medicine, worth any price to possess, yet to be sought for very cautiously. There was nothing partisan about a hide's medicine. It would benefit and protect us so long as we could hold it, but its benevolence would instantly be transferred to a new owner.

"They come from the river!" bawled Flat Mouth as we struck into the edge of the timber and turned to look back.

The warriors from the eastern shore were popping their heads above the bank. None had crossed directly behind us, out of respect for my gun. By going up or down stream they had lost time. The Sioux on the plain were now mounted and busy rounding up the rest of the animals. But the horses were reluctant to cease feeding and viciously rebelled. Two managed to break their hobbles and run clear of the herd. Flat Mouth watched the runaways through half-closed eyes. I gave my attention to the Indians.

Our situation was desperate. The strong timber we had entered followed a rivulet only for a short distance. It was only a thin grove on each side of the tiny stream, and to the north of it was the open plain again. It was surrounded on all sides by the plain except in the east, where the river flowed. Could we have had a brief respite we might have raised the canoe, patched it up and trusted to luck. While I was regretting our inability to do this, two of the Sioux scrambled over the bank, dancing and hooting and waving pieces torn from the damaged craft.

"That closes the river to us," Miss Dearness calmly observed.

I cut a slit in one of the robes and dropped it over her head so it formed a long apron in front and behind. She thanked me with a smile. She knew she would not be taken alive and this knowledge gave her strength.

I put on a robe, only I allowed it to hang on both sides. While this left my back and breast exposed, it gave me free play with the gun, and in case of arrow-fire I could turn sideways. Against a ball the robe would offer but small protection. Flat Mouth grunted in approval as he watched me prepare myself. Taking two of the robes, he slit them in the middle and put them on as I had done, making his armor doubly thick. The calfskin he hung down his back.

"Dig holes," he said, walking to the edge of the timber.

"What is it now, Eshkebugecoshe?" I called after him, fearing he planned a fanatical display of bravery by charging the Sioux single-handed.

"We must have horses. It is the only way," he answered without looking back. Standing in the open, he paused to study the enemy. Again he cried out:

"Dig! Dig! I will watch."

I FOUND a hole where an uprooted oak had torn the soil. Jumping into this, I began excavating with my knife. The girl joined me with her borrowed blade. We worked side by side, her red hair falling over her face and at times brushing against mine. I threw out the dirt with my hands and placed it as a breastwork, the butt of the tree with its long roots forming a good half of the defense.

Digging was slow work, however, and we soon shifted to dragging fallen timbers and building a barricade. Leaving her to finish

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the little fort with a mask of willow branches, I searched until I found a spot near-by where several moldering trunks lay criss-crossed. This I fashioned into a refuge for the Pillager. Having accomplished this while the chief stood guard, I crept forward and announced—

"We have dug the holes."

He did not appear to have heard me but continued staring at the Sioux. Those from the river were warily advancing. Only one of them that I could see carried a gun. I took careful aim and fired. It was a long shot and I missed, but the ball must have passed close to his painted head, for he ducked wildly and threw himself down, the whole line following his example. I let them have the second barrel on top of the first, believing I had ample time to reload. This double discharge from one gun was acknowledged with yelps of alarm.

They remained in the grass, their brown bodies scarcely to be distinguished from the brown earth. The effect of the two shots on the other group was equally pronounced. Abandoning the herd, they galloped to the river and took up a position behind those afoot. I reloaded and, aiming high, fired twice at the horsemen and wounded one of their animals.

Flat Mouth considered this to be a suitable time for his endeavor. Loudly singing his song of triumph, he stalked from the timber. He was rather imposing in his white robes. Nor was the effect lost on the Sioux, for I heard low cries of envy. They shot their arrows but the distance was too great, and he remained untouched. To rush him they would have to enter the zone of my gun-fire, crossing from east to west in front of me. The mounted Sioux now realized their mistake, and galloped back, making a deep detour.

I began to believe he might succeed in securing at least one of the animals, one that had broken its hobbles and had halted to graze on the short grass. Dropping his voice to a monotone, the Pillager began to advance toward this brute. The Sioux afoot and on horseback set up a loud howling, to frighten the animal, and discharged arrows in high arcs in the hope one might descend on the horse and send him galloping off. But the runaway continued feeding, quite used to his masters' hullabaloo. When Flat Mouth was within ten or a dozen feet and moving slowly, the brute raised its head and glared viciously. The Pillager made to pass him, still chanting.

"He'll get that one!" Miss Dearness exclaimed.

For the moment I had forgotten her, so intent was I on watching the chief. One horse might mean freedom for her.

A warrior leaped up from the ground and yelled to the horsemen. They began a turning movement and started a shrill "*Hi-yi-yi!*" to alarm the animal, at the same time recklessly charging the Pillager. I could have easily brought down one if not two of their ponies, but held my fire for fear of startling Flat Mouth's prize. The chief needed to exercise much patience. The enemy were coming toward him at a smashing gallop. The grazing pony was suspicious and kept turning so as to watch him. If not encumbered by the robes, he could have covered the distance in one spring and caught the beast by the nose. As it was, he maneuvered as coolly and deliberately as if he were alone on the plain.

"To the left!" softly cried the girl, tugging my arm.

I pivoted and beheld the warriors leaving the grass to run forward. The menace of the double-barrel was sufficient to send them to earth again.

"Good!" cried the girl. "I'll watch them."

Back went my gaze to the Pillager. The Sioux horsemen were perilously near, and I prepared to shoot. He was close to the pony, which snorted and jumped back a few feet, then ducked its head to snatch a mouthful of the poor feed. In the next second the Pillager had him by the muzzle, was on his back and darting like a white streak for the herd, the flapping of the robes giving him the appearance of some gigantic bird.

The advancing horsemen, as if afraid of the sacred robes, swerved deeper into the plain then conquered their reluctance and bore down on him. I took two quick shots, one a clear miss, the other wounding a warrior. His fellows instantly reined in.

"On the left!" cried the girl.

I wheeled and bumped into her, because she was standing so close and she had interposed her body between me and the men in the grass. I threw my arm about her and swung her behind me as a volley of arrows struck the ground around us, several rattling harmlessly against my robe. I raised my empty gun and the line of kneeling men

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flattened out, none daring to learn if I could fire more than two shots without reloading. They must have approached in a most subtle manner, or the girl would have warned me. At the least they had managed to get within long arrow range.

"Now you can stand between them and me," I told her.

Behind cover of her white robe I hastily reloaded without them seeing me; then I again placed her behind me. One of the scoundrels was lying on his back and sending arrows in a high curve.

Leaving her to watch them, I turned my attention to Flat Mouth. He was guiding his animal with his knees and sending arrow after arrow at the horsemen as he rode. Now he was up at the edge of the herd and the horsemen were maneuvering on the opposite side of the wide circle and wheeling into position to charge.

I fired one barrel and hit a nag, sending the rider flying to the ground. This halted their advance long enough for the Pillager to gather up two halters, lean low and cut the hobbles. When he turned to retreat the brutes balked and dragged back. The horsemen started to interfere, yelping fiendishly. I fired my second barrel and, although I could not see that I scored, my shot stopped them. Now the Pillager was coming at a hard gallop and I swept the Indians in the grass with my empty gun. To my great relief they did not rise, although they continued shooting their arrows until the chief had smashed into the undergrowth.

"For the Medicine Hair," he proudly announced as he leaped to the ground and made two of the ponies fast to an oak branch.

"I'll let you ride one of them, Mr. Franklin," she encouraged with a sad little play at cheerfulness.

"I will go back and get all of them," cried Flat Mouth, fighting his vicious beast to a standstill against a tree before he could mount him.

"No!" I cried, pointing to the line of Sioux, who had quit the grass during our minute of forgetfulness and were now racing toward the herd.

They were bent half double and grotesquely leaped from side to side as they ran to escape my lead.

"They will try to ride us down in force," muttered Miss Dearness.

I believed this to be their plan and urged her to fall back to our fort. She insisted on remaining with me until the attack was under way. The path to the river was open but we had no canoe. We could pass through the timber and race north and, at night, I would have asked for no better chance. Flat Mouth secured his pony and began gathering arrows from the grass. I could account for two with my gun and the Pillager was sure to score as good a tally, yet we must go under if they pressed the charge home.

I called for the Pillager to return to the timber and asked him which it should be—a break through the woods and a gallop north, or a last fight where we were.

"Stay till night," he promptly decided. "They can not dig us out. In the dark we will ride home."

"Can't they ride in here and get us?" she asked him.

"They could if they would pay enough," he admitted. "But they want scalps without losing any men. They have lost heavily on this war-path and they lost heavily when they brought the pipe the time before. If they ride at us they will not come too near. At night they will creep in. We shall not be here."

TO BE CONTINUED

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AN ANGEL WITH A TIGER'S SOUL

by S·B·H·HURST

Author of "Bumps," "The Brightest Jewel of Them All," etc.

"WELL, it's unlikely we'll ever find his relatives," answered the doctor. "If he has any, they're no doubt in England, and as we don't know his name we can not communicate with them. There isn't a clue to his identity, and no one has claimed the body. The more important question is: Was he connected with the gang of natives who tried to shoot the king and had a row with them, or did he just get there in time to stop the bullet with his own body? The fact of his being a white man disguised as a Sikh proves nothing. He might have been some sort of a private detective."

"I don't think so," responded the general, "but knowing India and its people as I do, I am willing to wager that we will never know who he was. We thought it best to keep all accounts of the attempted assassination out of the papers—men are as imitative as monkeys, you know—so that line of clues is cut off. No, I don't think we'll ever know. By the way, did you make anything out of that extraordinary last remark of his? You remember, just before he died, he said 'the brightest jewel of them all,' or words to that effect. Make anything out of it?"

The doctor drained his peg and shook his head.

"Hum." The general tugged thoughtfully at his white mustache. "Those words may be the clue to the entire mystery. I was born in Simla, you know," he concluded with seeming irrelevance.

"He is to be buried at the expense of the State, and a suitable stone erected, then?" The doctor lit a cigar.

The general nodded abstractedly, his thoughts wandering in a maze of possibilities.

A gang of native criminals had successfully impersonated the Sikh guards in the vice-regal palace in Delhi where the King and Queen of England were staying while at the durbar. Four of the criminals had penetrated to their majesties' private apartments. An Englishman, disguised as a Sikh, had appeared in time to fight with the criminals and to save the king's life—being himself shot during the mêlée. This man and his dying words had greatly puzzled the authorities, and it seemed that he would be buried without being identified.

"Well, sir?"

The doctor had risen and was waiting for further orders, when the noise of a native squabble penetrated into that exclusive room—the office of the commander-in-chief of the army in India.

"What the devil?"

The general shouted for his native orderlies, while it became obvious that some woman was responsible for the commotion. Two ruffled orderlies appeared. The noise now indicated that the woman was being removed forcibly.

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"Bring that woman in here!" ordered the general.

"*Sahib!*"

In the orderly's ejaculation of astonishment was blended forgetfulness of discipline and a palpable desire to disobey the order. The general stared, astonished. Then, coloring, he growled—

"Bring the woman here at once and God help you if she is hurt!"

With a reluctance as extraordinary as it was out of place, the orderly repeated the order outside the door, the general and the doctor looking at one another in astonishment. Perhaps never before in the history of India had a woman attempted to force her way into the office of the commander-in-chief. She must either be a most unusual woman or she must have come upon a most unusual errand. Why had the orderlies attempted to stop her? Not merely stop her reaching the office, as was their duty, but why were they anxious that she should not see the general after he had ordered that she should be brought before him?

A moment later she arrived in the room, a Sikh guard holding either arm as if afraid of what she might attempt. As the woman was under five feet in height, and the guards stood well over six, the picture they made was significant. It looked as if the guards had received some order concerning the woman which was opposed to that given by the general, an order they were afraid to disobey—that their somewhat slow minds were trying to carry out both orders at once, or, at any rate, the sense of them.

"Take your hands off her," growled the general who was fast losing his temper, "and get out of here."

The eyes of the two guards met in a question, but before the enraged general could get his voice into action they obeyed. The woman, a native, affectedly preened herself, brushing away imaginary dirt and drawling—

"Oh, *ee, burra sahib,* why don't you have the *topas* scrub those big dogs of yours. It is not seemly that a lady of my degree should be touched by such dirty savages!"

THE two guards had paused at the entrance-curtain, their faces indicating the unpleasant but picturesque death prepared for the woman by their imaginations. But, although she saw their mental pictures almost as clearly as they did themselves, she continued to drawl out a string of insulting abuse, even going so far as to comment upon their religion. The commander-in-chief touched a push-button while again ordering the two guards to leave the room. They had hardly passed out of sight when two British sergeants arrived.

"Stand outside and allow no native—whatever his rank—within a dozen yards," he ordered.

When the two non-coms. had taken their positions, he told the woman to sit down, conscious that he lacked precedent, but so interested in this unusual woman that he decided to establish it.

"Are you not a Parsee?" His question expressed a certain incredulity, yet a willingness to believe.

"Yes," she replied haughtily, "and I have come for the body of my husband."

"The body of your husband?"

"Yes—he was killed by a shot meant to kill the king."

"Oh!"

No one but his mother had ever believed the general to be quick-witted, but at least the woman's unexpected answer made him think. So the dead man had "gone native," had he? Ah, and the woman expected a pension. That was it.

But the implication involved in her coming escaped him altogether—that is, so quiet had the attempted assassination been kept, that only the palace officials and those immediately connected with the criminals could possibly have heard about it. Further, how did she know the man had died?

His mental limitations hedged him unhappily, so he merely asked her why she had come.

"As I said, *burra sahib*—" there was a trace of contempt about the manner of her speaking—"I came for the body of my husband—to give it proper burial."

She spoke Hindustani which the doctor—newly arrived from home—did not understand. He remarked in English—

"She's a pretty little thing. Does she say who she is, sir?"

"She's a Parsee—most of 'em live in Bombay, you know," responded the general, watching her.

Her eyes were fixed upon her tiny bare feet and she understood every word.

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After a moment's silence he went on—

"The body of the man you say was your husband has been prepared for burial and will be shortly buried as his religion provides," again speaking Hindustani.

She looked up and shuddered. Then, speaking rapidly:

"What, into the earth, among the worms? No, no, no—not that! Think of what that means! The face I love, the lips I have so often kissed, the arms that embraced me—all that I love still, to be eaten by the dirty, crawling worms! No, it shall not be—he must be taken to the burning *ghat*, given to the earthbound sun and burned!"

The general stared. What was the meaning of such audacious faking? He had been wrong in crediting Bombay with the majority of the Parsees in India but he was not so lacking in knowledge regarding their method of disposing of their dead.

"She says she wants to have the body cremated," he explained in a despairing sort of way to the doctor—his despair being due to his inevitable lack of self-confidence when in the presence of women, his anxiety to avoid clashing with the Government order concerning compliance with native customs, and his inability to understand why the woman was pretending the Parsees had adopted cremation. It was a puzzle, however, that might have troubled any one.

"And why not, sir?" The doctor bristled. "It's the only sanitary way."

"Yes, I agree with you. But haven't you heard about the 'towers of silence'? Stone towers, about twenty-five feet high, on the top of which a dead Parsee is placed by his sorrowing relatives—to feed the vultures! Lots of times you see two of the birds fighting for a choice bit—and now and then the choice bit drops on top of one. You are right—cremation is better, but I never heard of a Parsee advocating it. Unless she is a most infernal liar, I am afraid this thing is beyond me. What the devil did I have her in for?"

He appeared to be talking to himself as he concluded—a habit of his—and the doctor could hardly avoid smiling at an admission of incompetency from one so high in authority. The woman demurely studied the bangles on her slim ankles. Suddenly, as if he had made a decision—which was far from the fact—the general snapped in Hindustani, and with a characteristic lack of logic:

"I don't believe the man was your husband or that you are a Parsee. You think the raj will pay you a money pension because your husband is dead. Don't you know that he was shot while trying to steal?"

"You are a very brave man," she said softly in English. "Very brave—so few men have the courage to call a woman bad names."

The general blushed.

"I—er—beg your pardon—" he forgot she was an unimportant native woman—"but your coming here is so unusual. You say the man was your husband and that you are a Parsee. I know the Parsees do not burn their dead. How, then, can I believe what else you say?"

"I did not say my husband was a Parsee, or that I still held to all the Parsees' caste," she answered gently. "But my husband was an English officer, like you, and he always told me that he wanted to be burned."

"Ah, now I understand." The general's face cleared.

"Do you?" she asked innocently.

"Why yes, of course," he replied stiffly.

"Then why did I come here?"

"For the body of your husband."

"And do the Parsees make *suttee?*" she asked pointedly.

"By Jove!" he cried.

"What does she mean?" the doctor was all interest.

"*Suttee* was the old custom—we abolished it—whereby every honorable wife was burned alive with the dead body of her husband. She means that she has offended some powerful natives by coming here—that is, they will think she has betrayed them—the criminals who were behind the attempted assassination, I mean.

The doctor shook his head, as well he might, at the lame attempt at explanation, and the bell of the desk-telephone broke into the talk. The general turned to answer it at once—for no unimportant call comes so unceremoniously to the commander-in-chief of India.

"Yes. Oh, yes, sir. Yes, there is. But how did you know that? A friend who knows everything? Oh, yes, I have heard you speak of him. Hold her? Very well sir. Alone? Yes. Very good."

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He returned the receiver to the hook and turned to the doctor who, by the way, was his brother-in-law:

"The viceroy was speaking. I'm sorry but I must ask you to go. He is coming here and wants a private interview with this woman. I wonder how he knew she was here."

The doctor saluted and left the room. He would have willingly given several months pay for permission to stay. The seeming mystery surrounding the woman had fascinated him, but orders were orders, and he could not hang around the door trying to pick up secrets.

WITH the doctor gone, the native woman and the general entertained each other with a polite silence. Outside the room the two sergeants effectually isolated the remainder of mankind. Presently, even their straight backs took on a stricter stiffness when they came to attention to salute the viceroy of India attended by an elderly man in civilian clothes.

"Ah, general," the viceroy walked with his short, rapid steps, holding out his hand—"I want you to meet a friend of mine about whom I have spoken to you more than once—Mr. Sinclair." He indicated the elderly civilian who shook hands with the general while the two non-coms. bustled about placing chairs before again withdrawing.

The woman paid no attention—she was apparently more interested in the shape of her feet than in the Viceroy of India.

"Did this woman tell you why she came here, general?" asked Sinclair with an abruptness the general found annoying.

"To get her husband's body—the man who was shot. I presume you have heard."

Sinclair's lips twitched.

"Yes, I have heard, but did it occur to you to wonder how the woman heard?"

"From the men who escaped—the criminals who got away, of course."

The general's tone was sarcastic. He had taken a dislike to the elderly civilian. In India the army was everything, and its commander felt that Sinclair should show a greater deference.

"I see, but don't you understand, general, that if the woman was told that her husband was dead by the criminals who escaped, not only must she be connected with them, but her husband must have been one of them?"

"By Jove, I didn't look at it in that light exactly, although I did surmise that the woman was afraid she would be killed for coming here by the natives connected with the attempted assassination. So the disguised white man wasn't a hero after all?"

"You are wrong." There was just the least trace of contempt in Sinclair's tone. "I came here from Calcutta because a certain man whom I had known for many years had left there, bound for Delhi. I knew this man's peculiarities and when I heard that a man had been shot—a white man—under the circumstances we know about, I went to see the body and identified it as the body of the man from Calcutta. Menzies was his name—an ex-army officer and an ex many other things. But I could not understand what he was doing in the palace, why he was disguised, or what the circumstances were leading up to his giving his life to save the king's.

"I agreed with the viceroy that some criminal society was behind the attempted assassination, and, behind them again, a political society of which I know. At the viceroy's request I agreed to run the criminal society to earth and arrest its members, but I hadn't a clue. Also, to get close to the criminal society, I needed a disaffected member of it. I guessed that Menzies had been made a member and, when I heard that this lady had come to claim the body as being that of her husband, I felt sure that she could help me—because, unless she was willing to betray the society, she would hardly have come here at all.

"Then it dawned on me that the lady's coming to see you about the body was an excuse—that she wanted to avenge Menzies' death. Therefore Menzies must have been betrayed by the society—lured to the palace under some pretext and, refusing to shoot the king, had lost his own life."

He was looking directly at the woman.

"So I count on the lady to help me to get her the revenge she desires. I am frank—I need her and have no other plan. You see I am very vague. The lady must be courting death by coming here at all, therefore it is to her interest to be on my side. She speaks English, no doubt, as well as I do and must have had an interesting history. I have told you all I can deduce; now the lady will perhaps make the affair quite plain?"

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"Yes, *sahibs*." She spoke tensely. "The wise one is right. I came to help the *sahibs* and to get revenge for the betrayal of my love. But to ask me why is to ask why a woman loves—why she loves a dead man who loved her not when he lived—at least did not altogether love her. That is a hard question, as it is a hard thing for a woman to admit. No doubt, however, the clever *sahib* who knows so much will explain so small a matter as the workings of a woman's heart."

No one answered—even the general felt that the explanation she asked for was beyond him.

"So," she went on, wondering how much Sinclair really knew and how much he was pretending not to know, "when they laughed and said he, my love, was dead, I hated them. Loving him and hating them, I want to do them all the harm I can, so I came here. To get in here I said I wanted my husband's body, although I know they will kill me, even as they tried to prevent my coming here. But what do I care for death? The man I love is dead, so why should I want to live? Only to live long enough to hurt them who killed him!

"But, oh viceroy *sahib*, when I got here and saw the man to whom I must talk—when I saw that he could not understand and would only waste what I told, I felt as if I were spilling my life upon the sand. Now a wise *sahib* has come, and, as long as you can protect me—although your whole army may be impotent—I will help you to hurt the men who killed my man."

Sinclair studied the woman closely. After forty years in India he had learned the native character as no other Englishman, and his knowledge had aided him to some remarkable exploits through the medium of many strange adventures. To use the woman's craze for revenge was to use the only weapon he had for smashing the criminal society; and if that desire for revenge was genuine, he knew he could trust her to the limit.

But was it as sincere as appeared? There was the danger; and, as he foresaw some weird investigations in her company—alone with her, in a part of the city where a guard of white men would nullify his efforts—it was necessary that he should be sure about the woman's sincerity. Well, he had taken chances before, and no other course offered. She was willing to help him, and as he always worked alone until the climax, he was practically putting himself in her hands.

But, again, how much did she know about the society? It was unlikely that she could know everything. Yet, his intuition told him that she was hiding something—that she was by no means making a clean breast of her position. Such an attitude was characteristic of the native, and he was accustomed to it. She was the only tool he had, the one key to unlock the door of the mystery of the native criminal society which had been the curse of India for centuries. If, in trusting her, he went to his death, he at least had made a good end—an end which any man might contemplate with pride.

THE criminal society, so the woman said, had twelve captains—one in each of the twelve principal cities—but they were not the real heads. In fact not one of them knew who the real heads were. The society had been established gradually, but about a hundred and fifty years ago had passed into the control of certain families of high caste who took a certain percentage of the loot gathered by the society.

So strong was custom—as it is in India in all things—that no criminal had ever thought of changing the system, and there had never been an instance of a captain trying to obtain control. In addition to not knowing who the head of the society really was, it naturally followed that the twelve captains could only communicate with that head by messenger.

The woman admitted having been the mistress of a fat *babu*, the captain of the Delhi gang of the society, which statement conflicted with her alleged love for Menzies. But Sinclair did not question her on this point and, as long as her desire for revenge seemed genuine, he was content to let it alone. What more than interested him, however, was her statement that the twelve captains of the society were at that moment in Delhi, having been sent for by the Delhi captain because of an extraordinary situation.

The Delhi captain acted as secretary, and the cause of the meeting of the twelve was the disappearance of the messenger who went between the captains and the head of the society. It was believed that

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the head of the society had either known or suspected that the messenger was false to his oath and intended telling the captains who this head actually was. Therefore, the head of the society had killed the messenger.

This was the supposition, and, in the meanwhile, the captains were quite out of touch with the head of the society who was, of course, the brains and supplied all the plans of any criminal consequence.

She told them, further, that the dead Menzies had actually met the head of the society and arranged the plans with that head—it being agreed that, if he were successful, he was to become equal with the head—be above the captains while being known to them. It was felt that this arrangment would be better than the old system—the system which had gone to pieces because of the disappearance of the messenger.

Then she revealed to the astonished Sinclair that Menzies and the head of the society had planned to steal the crown jewels of Britain which had been brought from England to grace the king and queen at the durbar. Menzies had arranged the exceedingly difficult plans of this crime, while the head of the society had quite another object in view—the assassination of the king and queen, to do which the society had been paid a large sum by a radical political association.

As a matter of fact, the head of the society knew that the jewels were paste—that the real ones had never left England, but needing Menzies' skill to get into the king's apartment, he had pretended that the stealing of the jewels was the object.

When Menzies reached the door of the king's room, a note had been given him by one of his confederates which told him the jewels were false and that, if he would become one with the head of the society, he must kill both the king and queen. This his loyalty and decency would not allow him to do, so he fought to save the king and died. This explained his last words about the "brightest jewel of them all"—meaning, of course, the loyalty which caused him to sacrifice his own life for that of another.

All this Sinclair heard silently. He wondered where and when these twelve captains would meet—did the woman know?

She did know and asked whether he meant to take policemen and try to arrest the twelve.

He shook his head. He had no such intention. To arrest the twelve would not destroy the society, since the head of it could easily get twelve other captains. No, he would go to that meeting, dangerous though it might be, mark who the twelve were as well as he could, and try to learn what he could.

One of them, for instance, might have a scheme for getting again in touch with the head of the society; another messenger might show up—anything might occur—the twelve could be arrested any time—just a simple police job. No, what he wanted was the brains of the thing—the brains of the octopus which was throttling India, to which millions paid regular tribute for the privilege of being let alone. Now the brains had dared to strike at royalty. Those brains must be found.

Once before during his career, with but a deaf and dumb native slave belonging to another sort of society, he had penetrated into underground Calcutta, at great risk, and discovered enough to eventually cause the death of the men who were plotting another, and far more successful, Indian mutiny against the Government.

Yes, he would go alone with the woman. If she would lead him to the meeting of the twelve captains without his being discovered by them, he would promise she should be revenged on the brains of the society which had killed the man she loved.

How grotesque do the workings of the native mind seem when looked at from the standpoint of the Occident. That is the reason the West never understands the East. But Sinclair was more Eastern than Western and he thought just as a native thinks when he had work of this sort. Thus, in going upon a midnight expedition with a strange woman, he merely acted as a very intelligent native would have acted in his place—like a character in some new Arabian Nights. So imbued was he with his idea, that he saw nothing extraordinary about his methods.

It was dark, with rain threatening, when Sinclair and the lady—both dressed as poor natives and with their faces colored—the skin of the Parsee woman was quite as fair as that of the Englishman—started

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on their adventure; and, in spite of his age and long experience, the man at once felt the thrill of the mysterious lure of India.

As they passed through the narrow, ancient streets the air seemed like a potpourri of the memories of all the dead souls that had once lived there, stirring faintly at his passing and vainly trying to tell some secret of evil that weighed heavily. He did not think he was fanciful. On the contrary, he encouraged his feeling of superstition, knowing well that the spider web of intrigue he hoped to unravel had been spun by minds steeped in it, and that his hope of success lay in his ability to approach the problem in the mental attitude of its weavers.

At the end of a narrow lane, between the high, windowless walls of houses, the river flowed against the ancient stone steps leading down to it where, even at that hour, a few women were washing clothes against the stones placed there for that purpose.

THEY reached the steps, sat down and looked back, but, so far as they could make out, no one was following them.

"How are we going to get in?"

He had trusted her thus far without asking this question although he of course knew that if she were faithful to him her appearance at her old haunts would mean her instant death. He saw nothing extraordinary about his being there with her—about his sitting by the banks of the Jumna River alone with a woman of whom he knew practically nothing, near midnight, among the shadows and the pathetic ghosts of the lost peacock throne.

"Do not fear, *sahib*," she answered enigmatically.

"I do not," he retorted, "but only a fool lets fear pass him by without recognition."

"Yet Zoroaster says that it was given to us for our benefit, even as the birds and flowers; that the sun threw out petals which fell upon the world to form things. Was fear made by a sun-petal, *sahib?*"

She laughed softly.

"I won't discuss it with you." He also laughed, feeling at ease—not even a woman could laugh as she had laughed, if meditating treachery. "To beat you at an argument one must be able to make three puns in every line he speaks, and I am too old for such exercise."

"Yet wisdom is given to the aged because they can no longer enjoy the follies of youth," she replied.

"True, and from my small store goes out a question: Where is the door whereby we may enter this meeting? You will notice that I am not asking how we will manage to get out again."

"Is it not well, when you fear her jealous husband, to let your love wait—her scolding may flavor the kisses which, otherwise, you might not have lived to taste!"

"My child, you are clever. But there is no sign of our being watched, and I am too old to sit out in the wet, even with one so fair."

"True, *sahib*, but I enjoy your conversation. Very soon—where we are going—it will be dangerous to whisper."

"I am in your hands," he replied politely.

"And even though my hands have played with pearls without price, never before did they hold so much of value," she responded.

The dark water rippled languidly; its voice punctuated by the rain drops and the washing of clothes.

"I have waited, *sahib*," she went on, "until the twelve will be well assembled—until they will be chattering like their fathers, the apes, or like their aunts, a flock of crows. They will ask the fat one what he did to the messenger and, because he will tell them the truth, they will naturally not believe him. They will doubt him with much strong language because, for many years, they have been jealous of the fat *babu* because but one message came to him, instead of twelve, as should have been among equals.

"Oh, *ee, sahib*, they have no sense—so few men have sense—which is why I love thee, my father. Oh there will be a fine row, *sahib*, and you and I will enjoy it, like one of the shows where the *mem-sahibs* act naked—in clothes which fit too tightly. Yes, so much noise. And the fat one will sweat like a bewildered hog. *Sahib*, why do men grow fat? Thou canst not tell me? Eh, but I know—because I am a woman. Come with me and keep open your ears lest they miss something you should hear."

They left the *ghat* and walked to some steps which led to the second story of a very old house—steps outside the house itself, which might have been the great, great, great-grandfather of a modern fire escape made of stone. Much to Sinclair's

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surprize, the woman led him up the steps, taking no more precaution than she would have done if the place had been deserted.

He began to be alarmed, although they met no one, for every twist of the stairs was a perfect lurking-place for a would-be assassin. At the top of the stairs they found a large, iron-studded door which the woman unlocked with a large key of antique, native make.

When it opened, she pulled him into a dark passage, put a finger on his lips to command silence, locked the door again and hurried him along the passage. The place smelt strongly of a mingling of many native scents and old, musty things, and Sinclair started, in spite of himself, whenever his face or neck was brushed by one of the numerous, dangling spider webs.

They must have walked fully a hundred yards along this remarkable passage when she stopped him by a touch. It was so dark that the man could not see his hand when he held it before his face, and he wondered at the marvelous instinct by which she was enabled to find her way so accurately. Again she chose from among her bunch of keys, found the right one, and again the lock clicked. Sinclair heard a door open softly. She led him forward and closed the door. He felt sure that they were standing in a fairly large room, well furnished and swept and garnished.

Without thinking, he formulated the unuttered question—"Wonder if this is her den?—" using the word den as a man does when he means a study or a room peculiar to himself. Suddenly the full meaning of the word struck him with strange force, bringing to his mind a very ancient saying of a famous Indian ascetic.

"A woman is an angel with the soul of a tiger."

"An angel with the soul of a tiger!' And, fatuously, he had followed her into her den.

The negative effect of the continued darkness had no doubt much to do with the influence the saying exercised upon the man's mind; but, as she moved about, evidently looking for something, he saw his position with clarity and reasoned with a logic unusual even for him.

"Ah, but if men could but read women's minds, *sahib!*" she whispered, gliding to his side.

She could not see his face. Had she been able to do so, her attitude of airy egotism might have lost its frothiness.

"Can not we have a light—why do we wait?" His voice was weak and shaky, as if the strain of the night's doings, culminating in the danger and weirdness of his position, were more than his old body could withstand.

"No—and speak softly. If you could exchange all the wisdom of your years for the ability to read the mind of one woman—not mine, but the mind of a common woman—you would be wiser than you are," she taunted, taking his hand with a familiarity he resented.

"A woman's mind can not be read," he retorted, allowing her to retain his hand, wondering how long and for what purpose she was going to let him stand in the middle of a dark room. "No, because the pages of it have no numbers and are out of place and the words have no regular sequence."

She laughed softly again.

"So I have heard the fat *babu* say when the book was a language he did not understand. Ah, *sahib*, because you know so much I am moved almost to give you the key to the wisdom of the ages so that you might die at the marvel of the cipher so revealed. Is the key to the heart of a woman love, *sahib?* Will love unlock the door to her soul?"

SHE was greatly moved—so much so that Sinclair almost believed she had planned his murder but now lacked the will to do it. Leading him to a large, luxurious couch, covered with silk, and scented as if it were stuffed with everlasting rose-petals, she sat down—or rather, sank, in the floating manner a feather falls—pulling Sinclair to her side. She panted with emotion, but Sinclair could not believe he was the cause. They were evidently in her boudoir—a hidden place of hers—her "den" as Sinclair had called it.

How the saying haunted him—it was like some finger of fire pointing through his mind to the solution of the puzzle of the criminal society. But at what did its insistence hint? In that same room, no doubt, she had parted with Menzies when he went to his death. Sinclair wondered if she had tried to stop him. How much had she known? Suddenly she dropped his hand, moved away and flung herself full length on the couch, weeping bitterly, rocking her body in agony.

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"Oh, my love, my love," she wailed. "Why did I not know you better—why did I not understand?"

Sinclair tensed, like an old hound scenting game. He remembered that she had not been to this room since the death of Menzies. It was almost certain that she had not intended coming there tonight—the lure of memory had been too strong, and she had stepped aside from the course she had intended taking. There was little danger, then, but why would she not allow a light? Ah! Well, he could read that much of the mind of a woman—even though it were but picture writing. She sobbed unrestrainedly as if sure that there were none to hear her. An angel with a tiger's soul. And then suddenly came understanding. He saw it all.

Sinclair moved uneasily, groaning hollowly. The woman—and Sinclair realized how lovely she must seem amid her tears—stopped crying, moving to his side. As she touched him he reeled forward, falling off the scented divan to the floor in a sort of fit.

She was with him in a moment, forgetting her grief in what seemed to be genuine sympathy. He did not answer her hurried questions. She rubbed his hands and then, as he did not respond, she brought water and smelling-salts—finding them as easily as if the room had been lighted.

Those smelling-salts were exceedingly powerful, and when the lady turned their full power loose under his nose and kept it there, he found it convenient to move feebly, feign returning consciousness and ask where he was. She tried to make him understand by giving him a brief outline of the night's doings, but his brain seemed to have lost its power of grasping things. She knew his history—what was there that woman of marvels did not know—and remembered that he was said to use large quantities of opium. This, then, and his age accounted for his collapse.

A few moments later Sinclair began to babble in a high, thin voice, the gist of which was an entreaty to be taken home.

"But we are alone, *sahib*," she urged, "and I can not carry you. Stay here with me—it is quite safe, and I have food and wine."

Apparently he failed to understand her, for he began to struggle to his feet—finally, with her assistance, standing upright. Her lovely arms were about him, and he patted them in what he believed to be a strictly paternal manner.

"I have opium, too, *sahib*," she whispered.

"I am sorry," he explained, "but I have been subject to these spells ever since I ceased to use opium—I miss the stimulation of it apparently. And tonight I have gone through more than I should—for I am not quite recovered. I generally take another drug, but I have none with me."

"Are you well now?" she asked, all sympathy.

"Yes, for the moment." He felt like a thief stealing her tenderness. "But I must get to bed as soon as possible or I will have another attack. Perhaps a night's sleep will make me all right—but I am an old man. Will you please help me down the stairs and home again?"

Which way did the thread of the web run? Would she help, or would she react to the old urge, the power of which had been broken by her love for Menzies? Apparently love, revenge, self-immolation, sympathy—these, running criss-cross, held her the more strongly, and she began to help him to the door and so out of the house, down the steps and into the narrow lane.

No word passed between them. Sinclair was silent because he feared that words might break the little hold he had on her, and she was thinking too deeply to be bothered with words. In this manner they went along—an old native and his daughter or, perhaps, too young wife, at whom men leered. The rain had ceased, and the night was full of stars. They reached Sinclair's quarters where they were met by an exceedingly anxious and irritable young Englishman, one Sesson, and a seemingly placid, but much worried stout *babu*. These two, ignoring the woman, fell upon Sinclair like lost children.

"Sick or hurt?" questioned Sesson, and when Sinclair, without any answer, continued toward his office, Sesson went on:

"I tried to stop you, but you would go. Where's the sense of your going on these fool, melodramatic expeditions? You're worse than the most credulous yap I ever heard about. A pretty woman comes along, spins a fat yarn—after finding out the kind of yarn you like to listen to—gets your sympathy until you follow her out into the night—and refuse to allow anybody to go

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with you—as if she had you doped or hypnotized. Where's the sense of it? What did you expect to find? Even supposing the woman didn't lead you to her gang—perhaps she failed to connect—what did you expect to get out of going with her?"

This from Sinclair's only white assistant who, while always obeying, felt called upon at times to remonstrate with his superior whom he loved as a father. When Sesson ceased because of lack of breath, the *babu* began. But the *babu's* annoyance was vented upon the woman. Like all natives, he regarded women as lower animals, and, that one should have the power to lead Sinclair out upon such a wild expedition—against his wish—galled him exceedingly. Therefore he prefaced his tirade with a few well chosen, but somewhat anatomical, words having to do with the sex in general.

During this prelude the four entered the office. There Sinclair became his usual self with strange suddenness and crisply requested the *babu* to defer his speech-making until a more suitable time.

"THEN you're not hurt or sick?"

Sesson looked at his boss curiously, but not more curiously than did the woman.

"I am better, anyway," returned Sinclair in his "working" tone of voice. "Get me number two map of the city, please."

He sat down at his desk, after placing a chair for the woman, studied the map for a moment and made a circle upon it around a certain block of houses near the river. Sesson and the stout *babu* watched what he did with grave attention, the change in his voice having told them that he had been out upon no foolish errand.

"You will arrange with the special police draft under our orders. Station men so that nobody can escape from the houses in the circle—although there are no doubt underground entrances leading from house to house—and arrest every man and woman whom you find in that circle, more especially twelve men you will probably find together. I leave this to you two and expect a clean-up. Hurry!"

The two helpers left the office, and the woman's lips curled in a little sneer of contempt.

"So, *sahib*, you are only common after all. You only just pretend. Did I not tell you, and did you not understand, also, that to arrest the twelve captains would be no good. You will send them to prison, yes, and what good will that do? You may question the twelve for a year but they can tell you nothing more than I have told. And the head of the society, the brains, will find twelve more captains, and you will be just where you were at the beginning—worse, because the society will be more careful in future. Also, I can help you no more because you go contrary to what I tell you."

"And is that not the best way—" smiling—"when one is dealing with the mind of a clever woman?" he asked enigmatically.

She shrugged, but across the perfect oval of her face a shadow passed.

"Perhaps it will be better and it will certainly save time, princess, if you will tell me all about it—for I doubt if you can tell me why you did it," he startled her by saying.

For the space of a few seconds their eyes met—long enough for Sinclair to mark her hesitation—and then—

"I don't understand you," she said, too late, "unless you are again sick."

"It came to me so curiously," he went on, as if talking to himself. "I was like a man unraveling a ball of knotted string when suddenly it all straightened out. I can not tell you how I did it—indeed, as I said, it suddenly happened. There is an old saying, and you took me to your 'den'——"

"To my what?" she demanded.

"Pardon me, princess! The word is but an English slang saying which means room of utmost privacy."

"Ah, and why call me princess?"

"In trying to pretend you do not understand me, you go too far—trying to be natural, innocent, you seem flat, as it were. If you had only risen a little—but there was no sign of astonishment when I told you I knew—when I ordered the arrest—when I called you by your proper title. Your fair skin did for a time make me think you were really a Parsee. Like many high-caste ladies, you are rather careless about other religions—don't take the trouble to learn about their customs. But I admit, to my shame, that I did not get my clue from that mistake of yours as I should have done if I had been really clever."

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"Mistake?" she asked incredulously, playing with one of her many rings.

"Yes, when you told the general that you wanted the body to be burned. Of course you corrected yourself very cleverly afterward by saying that your husband was not a Parsee, and I know there is some trouble between the two sects—if sects they may be called—about admitting men or women of other religions. The fact was, however, you went to the general, full of grief, and spoke from your heart, asking that the body be taken to the burning *ghat.* Had you been a Parsee, you would never have made such a request—you could not have made it because such an idea would have been repulsive to you. But, of course, princess you are not a Parsee, and, in your sorrow, you spoke from your heart. Strange that I didn't see clearly then that, with your fair skin, you were a high caste princess or *maharani.*"

"*Sahib*, you must be very sick. Let me get a physician."

"For how long have you been the head and brains of the largest criminal society in India—perhaps the only society? Don't you think you may as well tell me? You need not be afraid."

"Afraid? I?" The scorn was regal. "*Sahib*, you are offensive!"

"I beg your pardon again. I should have said that I will not take any action against you that you need fear."

"Does that mean prison?" She was too sensible to pretend further innocence.

"No, tell me all about it, and we will call it king's evidence—letting you go free on your promise to never again become a member of a criminal society. I owe you this much for the faith you kept tonight."

"You are too big a man and far too clever to break a promise, so I will tell you, but it is a very long story, Sinclair *sahib.*"

Again the grotesqueness of the East when seen through Western eyes. From their manner, one might have believed he had asked her to have a cup of coffee, and she had accepted if—laughingly requested—he would put two lumps of sugar in the cup.

"I have often wanted to hear it—you see, I know you now."

"And I have known of you for some time—desiring, yet not wishing to meet you," she responded. "But my story—ah, *sahib*, your Shakespeare, given a lifetime to work at it, would fail to do it justice though it would be his masterpiece. But won't you first tell me how you, for once, saw clearly through a woman's mind—because you admit that my mistake at the general *sahib's* gave you no hint at the time."

SINCLAIR scrutinized her closely. Her vivacity had left her and she spoke with a weariness—as if the entire weight of her life were bearing upon her, crushing out all desire to continue living.

"By what the logicians call a process of elimination, princess. Everywhere I found you—at every corner of my reasoning. Who gave orders to Menzies? Who knew about the meetings of the captains, and that the messenger had disappeared, or ——?"

She sighed.

"You are so very wise, but, had I been a man, you would have known earlier. Is that not so, *sahib?* Admit that I did blind you, if ever so little, with what has dazzled so many. It is one of my few remaining requests."

He bowed, admitting it.

"Please tell me a little more—I don't want to trouble you."

"There were always criminal societies, as you must know," she went on tiredly, "but about two hundred years ago, when Nadir Shah carried the peacock throne into Persia where the Parsees came from—" a momentary gleam of fun died almost as soon as it became visible—"the families of the kings of Delhi were scattered, and three brothers, who were all wounded, saw all their power gone and no chance of getting it again.

"But the love of power, *sahib*, is born in a man—he gets it from his fathers and must obey its call—and the three brothers had to satisfy their thirst for it, or else life held nothing for them. Besides, they were poor and had lost all. So they decided to make war on all the people—to gather together a band of what you call criminals, and prey upon everybody. It was just the same thing, *sahib*, only done in secret, that their fathers had always done.

"Very soon they had their captains in all parts of India, only in those days the captains knew who were their leaders, the old king's sons.

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"It was only after the British made prisons and set policemen to catch what they called criminals, that the sons of the old king's sons saw it would be better and safer not to allow their captains to know who they were.

"Therefore, they devised an oath and made a messenger swear not to betray them—to go between them and their captains, carrying orders, and bringing back their division of the money.

"This went on for many years, but always the descendants of the old king of Delhi kept in touch with what you call politics without it being known that they were, also, the head of the criminals, as you call them.

"So the years passed until, in nature's way, there was only one left—one man, the only living descendant of the old king. This was not known to the captains—now twelve, one in each city. This young king married me! Then, *sahib*, he died, leaving no son.

"So I became head of the society, but the messenger, a man of high-caste, said it was not fit that I should be head and proposed to take my place, saying he would betray me to the captains if I would not agree. And, *sahib*, he said I should be his favorite woman but not his wife. I pretended to agree, and—the messenger died.

"So I was still the head of the society, without a messenger. Therefore I became my own messenger—using the great seal, as of old, on my orders so that the captain in Delhi would know it to be genuine. Thus it was that the fat one in Delhi began to try to persuade me to betray the head of the society, little guessing that I was that head. He made love to me, and, as usual, I pretended to accept his love—scorning him and always leaving him in time, pretending to take his report and money to the head of the society.

"For some years I lived in that room where we were tonight, and much money and jewels are hidden there where none but I may find them.

"But, *sahib*, I grew very weary of giving orders, of pretending to be the messenger, of holding the fat one at arm's length and of living without love. But I was in touch with a political society—I doubt not you know it, but I will not name it—and, as the messenger of the criminal society, I pretended to take a request from the political society to the head of the other, offering two hundred thousand *rupees* for the killing of the queen and king.

"So I took this offer to myself, and while I pondered on it the word came that a very clever white convict asked admittance to the society and was willing to attempt any task to prove himself. I pretended to bring word that his task should be the stealing of the king's jewels which the political *babu* had told me were false—meaning to use the white man to accomplish the killing of the king. But when the white man came to Delhi I found I loved him, and—I swear it, *sahib*—I did not want the king killed.

"But when the white man whom you call Menzies did not return my love, I hated him and sent him to steal the jewels, knowing they were not to be stolen but that a note should be given him when he reached the king, saying the jewels were false, and that if he would become a member of the society he must shoot the king. But, *sahib*, as soon as he was gone from me, I loved him again and sent a swift messenger to cancel the order of the note—telling him the truth and calling him back to me. But I was too late.

"Then I went mad, *sahib*, and wanted his body and also wanted to destroy all who had worked with me and those who caused the death of my love. Oh, how hard it was to play that game. It all seems like a dream. Have I explained myself?"

"I think I understand it all," replied Sinclair. "But there are a few questions I should like to ask you."

She smiled at him. Then, very slowly:

"I think you must trouble to answer those questions for yourself, *sahib*. You are wise, and they are not difficult. It is not polite to ask a man to wait overlong—and my love is waiting. I am glad to have met so wise a man as you."

Then she wilted—a frail armful of loveliness among many jewels and much white linen.

In his report, Sinclair wrote—

"Too late I understood the twisting of the large emerald ring on her finger—an ancient poison-ring with a tiny needle."

But it seems unlikely that he did not understand, because he must have realized it was the best, if not the only way out of the difficulty.

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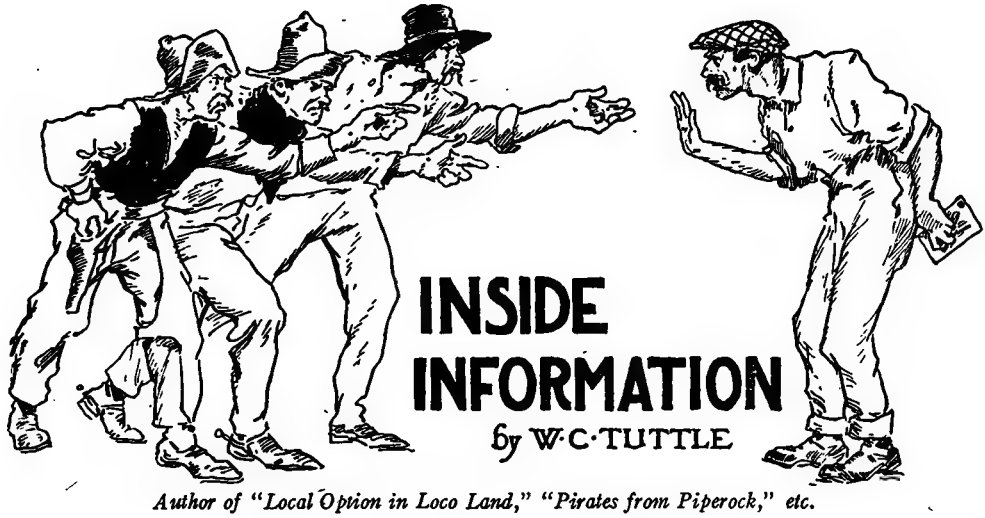

INSIDE INFORMATION

by W·C·TUTTLE

Author of "Local Option in Loco Land," "Pirates from Piperock," etc.

HE WASN'T very big, that feller christened Alexander Claypool by honest but Missouri parents, but he had a heap of faith in his ability. Once upon a time he hopped on to a big *hombre* and proclaims to injure him to a great extent. The big feller says—

"Little person, put on your coat or I'll bend you plumb out of shape."

And then Alexander Claypool hops upon his discarded clothes, cracks his heels together and proclaims—

"I'm small but I'm Gawd A'mighty Jones!"

Thereupon he becomes known to all men as "Mighty" Jones, and Alexander Claypool goes into the discard.

Number two was handed the apellation of Arthur Chesterton when he comes into this here vale of tears, but later on, after he shucks parental care, he opines to wear a buckskin shirt. Being as bucksin ain't noways partial to laundry trials, in the course of time he acquires the name of "Dirty Shirt." This being a heap appropriate, Arthur Chesterton is an also-ran.

Number three claims that when his paw and maw looked upon him in infancy with loving eyes, maw nodded when paw said—

"We'll call him Amos Carter."

Amos Carter grew up and pilgrimed West, where he ebbed and flowed across the sands of time until he hives up permanently near Piperock, after beating a posse across the line.

Seems like Amos procures a birthday and opines to show the town of Last Chance what real wear and tear looks like. He went broke during the opening chapter and goes into a jewelry store to see if he can pawn his gun. He shoves the gun across the counter and an obliging clerk fills a sack with all the plunder in the place and hands it to Amos, who thanked him profusely, left his gun on the counter and went out to show the natives a new way to drink whisky straight.

Seems like the clerk mistook Amos' well-meant motives and joined forces with the city marshal, and between 'em they busts up Amos' party. Amos ain't got no gun, but he's got a fast bronc and he arrives in Piperock broke, being as he left his pistol compensation on the first bar. His tale of wo lost him his good name and from that time on he pricks up his ears at the sound of "Jewelry."

And they was all named Jones.

That ain't all the Joneses in the State, but they're all that seem to figure in this tale of trouble.

Me? I'm Ike Harper. Seems like fate intended me to be a innocent bystander. I comes of a good family, well bred and all such tender things that don't get you nothing in poker games or gun fights, and the only thing that folks can say against me is the fact that I'm a pardner of Magpie Simpkins, the sheriff, and tender of heart.

Dirty Shirt Jones is plumb out of line in one eye, walks like somebody was kicking him behind the knees, and his mustache don't grow in no particular direction.

Jewelry Jones is about sixteen years old

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in the head and seventy-five in the feet. He looks in the face like fate had intended him for a Siwash totem-pole, then got religion and repented. Jewelry is one of them tapering sort of *hombres*—tapering from his feet upwards.

Mighty Jones squeaks when he walks or talks, being as he's hoarse of voice and hobnailed of hoof. He lives to argue and feel sorry for Mighty. He gets religion every time "Old Testament" Tilton stops at his shack, and he gets drunk every time he stops at a saloon. He owns an ingrown conviction that he was born to get shot accidental, and a lot of good citizens have tried to prove him wrong by acting intentional.

NOW that introductions are over, I will proceed. Comes a morn in Spring such as the poets sing about, when the magpies hunt for what died during the last big snow and the coyotes dig new bungaloos in the sunny side of the hills.

On such a morn we're setting in the sun outside of Wick Smith's store and post-office at Piperock. The stage has just come in, bringing the usual amount of plunder from Paradise and mail from all points of the compass. Mail don't mean nothing to Piperock, being as them who live there don't write for fear folks might find out where they are, and them who do know we're here don't write because we live here.

Them three Jones persons, old Judge Steele, Magpie Simpkins and myself sets there on the steps and argues about whether if General Grant hadn't been so busy fighting the battle of the Alamo, would the Boer War been over sooner. We settles that and then comes a difference of opinion as to whether the *Santa Maria* was Captain Kidd's flagship or was it the Mexican gunboat that sunk the *Merrimac*, when Wick Smith comes out with a letter in his hand.

"Gents," says he, "not knowing your original birth or baptism names, I asks you all and sundry which of you Jones' has the initials A. C. before the family cognomen?"

"Present," says Mighty, standing up.

"Here in person," says Dirty.

"Mine!" snaps Jewelry, holding out his hand.

Wick looks at all three of 'em and shakes his head.

"One letter can't be for all three," says he. "This is for A. C. Jones, E-squire."

"The same of which differentiates me from the common or hillside variety," states Dirty Shirt.

"Now, now, I know she's mine," stutters Mighty, hitching his belt.

"Like —— it is!" snorts Jewelry. "Hand her over, Wick. Them is the magic words what makes me sure she's mine. I got a letter once and that's the way she was inscribed. I'm reaching, Wick."

"A. C. stands for Alexander Claypool," announces Mighty in a high voice.

"She's Arthur Chesterton, if you asks me," proclaims Dirty Shirt.

"Huh!" grunts Jewelry, disgusted-like. "You're both loco. It means Amos Carter. Amos Carter Jones, E-squire, which is me and mine. *Sabe?*"

"Now, now, you fellers quit jangling!" squeaks Mighty. "She's mine, and I don't hanker to be shot as a innocent bystander over something what don't concern either of you. Shut up complete-like and let me take what belongs to me. The Gover'ment of the United States ain't to be tampered with, and she sure takes exceptions when somebody steals somebody's mail, don't she, Wick?"

"Somebody's," agrees Wick. "She does at them times, Mighty."

"E-squire!" explodes Jewelry, squinting at Mighty. "After your name? You poor little chuckle-headed chickadee, who would call you E-squire?"

"Haw! Haw! Haw!" roars Dirty Shirt. "What they'd call either of you *hombres*, they'd never dare to even send it inside a letter."

"Haw. Haw. Haw!" mimicks Jewelry. "What you laughing at, you cross between a peanut and a pin-feather?"

"Halt!" yelps Magpie, hopping out into the road with a gun in each hand and a pained expression on his mustache. "Shut up three at a time! All you jangling Joneses cool off and show sense. Judge, what had we better do with them—outside of putting them in jail?"

"Well," says the old judge, cocking his hat over one ear and taking a salivary shot at a sand lizard, "I'd adjudicate and make a motion that we read that letter myself, Magpie."

"Like —— you will!" yelps Dirty Shirt. "You can't peer into no private correspondence of mine, judge. Not while I'm alive you don't."

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"I don't like to bite off more than I can chew, judge," states Mighty, "but I will say this much: You won't read my letters as long as I've got a nerve left in my trigger finger. No lawyer is going to get me into trouble by poking his nose into my private mail. In order that you may not misunderstand me, I'd ask you to select your epitaph just prior to the time you tears the corner off that envelop."

"How does you stand, Jewelry?" I asks.

"Our folks fight for privacy," declares Jewelry. "All my life I've lived under the impression that what's mine is mine. I leads a life that is a open book for all men to read, but what is wrote to me in a letter is a private affair of mine. *Sabe?* I hates to make a war-talk, gents, but I will say this much: When foreign hands start tearing the corner off a envelop upon which is wrote the name of A. C. Jones, E-squire, I'm going to shoot."

The judge tilts his hat over the other ear, takes another shot at the lizard and clears his throat.

"Motion overruled and objection sustained," says he.

"And I've still got that letter," says Wick.

Nobody says anything for a while, but them three Jones' sure are finicky about the hang of their belts.

"The insides of the letter might settle who she belongs to," suggests Magpie disinterested-like. "What do you think?"

"Sure would," agrees Jewelry. "Let me open it, Wick."

"Just a mo-ment, just a mo-ment," says Dirty soft-like. "I don't care to have no danged diamond-thief peering at my letters. I'll open it."

"To which I adds derision," proclaims Mighty. "As I said before, gents, I ain't part nor parcel to no such arrangement."

"I ain't no diamond-thief!" howls Jewelry. "I'll tell you——"

"I know," says Dirty, "you claim to have traded a six-dollar pistol for the entire contents of a jewelry store."

"We're talking about mail—not morals," advises Magpie.

"Property is property," argues Dirty Shirt. "Who steals my letters steals as much as if it was my pocketbook, Magpie."

"More," says Mighty. "There's something in the letter."

"What does you think you know about my finances, feller?" asks Dirty.

"You're sober," says Mighty, "and you've been in town an hour."

"Which is irrevalent and has no bearing on the case," says the judge. "I expresses sorrow that your parents happens to pick out the same initials, but I feels worse that you three ever was born. Better that you three died in childhood and went to Glory, than to have growed up, growed whiskers and mean dispositions and came to Pipe-rock."

"Your expression of sorrow is like the blatting of a sheep, judge," says Dirty Shirt, which is a mean thing to mention in a cow-country.

"I've heard tell that you herded a few over in Custer county a few years ago, Dirty," says Mighty, grinning.

"Yeah? Is that so? Well, let me tell you something, feller. You was sold with a bunch of sheep two years ago, the same of which is common knowledge. Yes you was, Mighty. I hears Bill McFee tell the whole tale. Feller named Woolie Wilson sold you. Told a buyer that he had three thousand head, and they only totaled two thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine.

" 'You're short one,' says the feller. 'I'm not,' says Woolie, pointing at you. 'There's the odd one!' 'He ain't no sheep,' says the feller, and Woolie says: 'The —— he ain't. I ought to know—he's been working for me six months.' 'For that one I deducts ten dollars off the purchase price,' says the buyer. 'Sold!' says Woolie, and then he went around telling folks that the buyer beat himself. Ain't it true, Mighty?"

Mighty sets there tongue-tied. He's so mad he can't swaller. Any time you accuse a cow-man of being sheep—well, you're horning in where angels fear to tread.

"You *hombres* better get rational again," advises Magpie. "You can't even argue without getting personal. I asks that Wick put that letter into a safe place, intact and unglued, there to repose serene until such a time as you belligerent tribesmen settle the ownership. When you does you can come to me and I'll procure same for you. Satisfied?"

"But not contented," says Dirty. "She's mine and I'll have it myself."

"Ain't you got no reasoning powers, none of you?" askes Mighty. "How many times do I have to rise up and announce ownership?"

"Oh, shucks!" Jewelry gets up and

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hitches his belt. "Of all the hard-headed *hombres* I ever seen you're the worst. Don't I know my own mail? Don't I know who I've been expecting a letter from? Ain't I familiar with handwriting well enough to identify the writing on that envelop?"

"Under certain circumstances," nods Wick; "but this happens to have been wrote on one of them typewrite machines, Jewelry."

We all sets there for a while, and then Dirty gets up and stretches himself.

"I knowed a postmaster to lose his job when a feller complained about him not giving up his lawful mail," observes Dirty, "and under them circumstances I'm sort of obliged to write to the President."

"If you knowed his name," nods Magpie, "but you don't."

"There ain't but one, and he'd get it," says Jewelry.

"If you knowed where he lives," states Mighty hoarse-like, and the other two Jones' nods.

"Yeah," admits Dirty, "being as there's so many towns where he ain't."

"Well," says I, "this argument seems to have run itself into a corral, so you might as well drop it. Be sorry that you're all A. C. Jones and shake hands."

"With that shepherd?" asks Dirty, pointing at Mighty. "Or with a jewel rustler? Not me, Ike."

"A sheep," says Jewelry, "could easy get disgusted with you both."

"Wick, you put that letter in a safe place," orders Magpie, "until there comes a understanding or a double vacancy in the Jones tribe."

Dirty Shirt seems a heap displeased when me and him strolls over to Buck's place.

"My paw says to me," says Dirty confidential-like, "when you goes out into this cruel world, get what is coming to you, Arthur Chesterton Jones. If you can't get it honestly—get what is coming to you. *Sabe?*"

Dirty drifts out after while and Mighty drifts in. I asks him how the feed is on his side of the range, but his mind ain't on bunch-grass.

"Gawd helps them that helps themselves, Ike," says he serious-like.

"Suppose he can't help himself, Mighty?"

"Well, under them circumstances he has to use force, I reckon."

I meets Jewelry on the steps of the grog-shop.

"One nice day," says I offhand-like.

"For what?" he asks. "Can you point out one danged thing she's good for? I ain't appreciative of weather conditions as long as my legal mail is in escrow. By hook or by crook I gets my letter, Ike. Hear me hooting?"

"Jewelry," says I, "you talk like a cross between a shepherd and a bunco man. Hook or crook, eh?"

"All I ask is to get what is coming to me, Ike."

"You'll likely get it, Jewelry," says I, and then I goes down to the sheriff's office, where Magpie reposes with his feet on the table and his nose in a week-old paper. Along about dark Wick ambles in and sets down with us.

"That letter," says Wick explaining-like, "makes me nervous. Them Jones' are liable to go too far. *Sabe?* In daylight she ain't so bad, but at night they might do something, Magpie. They walks past too much."

"Hold up your hand, Ike," orders Magpie, and after a "s'whelp me Gawd," I'm deputized to do as I'm told.

"Ike will mount guard tonight, Wick," says Magpie, "and they'll only do harm over his dead body."

"Feel safe, Wick," says I, "'cause it won't never be done. Any old time they gets anything over my dead body they'll be so danged winded and so far away from Piperock that there won't be anything to get—except back."

About nine o'clock Magpie leads me down to the front of Wick's store, sets me down on the porch and places a rifle on my lap.

"Ike," says he, "the lawful honor of my office is at stake. You set here, and if any of them three snake-hunters comes monkeying around you, assassinate him. *Sabe?* If you die you're a hero."

"If you think I will you're crazy, Magpie. I didn't come here to die."

"Man is of few days and full of trouble, Ike."

"Yeah," I agree, yanking a shell into the chamber of that .45-.70. "As soon as you get about a hundred feet away, Magpie Simpkins, you better go fast and crooked, 'cause I'm liable as not to mistake you for somebody coming. I'd hate to kill you and

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inherit your office, but dang your long, hungry carcass, you will insist on swearing me into things like this."

I SETS there a while. It's a pretty dark night and things are quiet. Up at Buck's place I can hear Andy Johnson wailing "Sweet Marie" on his squeeze-organ, but after a while that dies out and all is still. I gets tired of setting there alone, so I gets up and walks around the building. There's a back door, and a window on one side. I reflects wise-like that a burglar ain't noways going to come to the front door, and how am I going to guard both ends and the side to once? Answer—go inside.

I leans a board up against the side of the house, slides the window open and drops inside. I shuts the window behind me. It's goshawful dark in there and I fall over everything in sight and some things I can't see. After a while I gets my bearings and pokes back into the post-office end, where I sets down on a pile of blankets.

Then I gets to thinking thusly: if there ain't no letter in that safe, what's the use of guarding the place? Them *hombres* don't want nothing but that letter. Now I ain't no burglar and I don't want anybody to get that idea. If postmasters and bankers had the foresight I've got there wouldn't be no use for burglars.

I crawls over to the safe and feels her over. I didn't have no idea as to how I was to get inside of it, but like any other danged fool I takes hold of the door, gives a yank, and she opens up like a corral gate. I gets scared for a minute and then I paws around inside and, by grab, I found the letter.

I shoves it down in my pocket, listens for a minute, and I never wanted to get out of any place so bad before in my life. I just takes one step, when I hears a noise like somebody shoving that window up, so I drops down behind that pile of blankets and pulls my pistol, which is handier at close quarters in the dark.

I hears somebody fall over something and there comes to my ears a sound of somebody cussing low and sweet. Then here he comes, squeaking along the floor, whispering to himself, and sets down in front of the safe. I hears him grunt when he swings the door open and then I hears him cuss in mournful whispers. It's Mighty.

Then he crawls out of there and I hears the window close behind him. I sets there to give him plenty of time to get out of sight and then I hears that window go up again. Comes a dull bump from the other room and somebody swears out loud. There is silence for a while and then I hears this second party crawling on their hands and knees, and they stops at the safe. I can hear him breathing hard, and then comes a cuss word that would delight the ears of a mule-skinner.

He gets up and starts to walk away, and I can tell by the cock-eyed way he has of running into things that it's Dirty Shirt. He rams into the wall and sets down hard on the floor, and I reckon it takes him five minutes to navigate to the window and get out.

Then comes the next interruption. The window squeaks to the top and I hears a pair of heavy boots hit the floor. He comes angling along, gets his feet tangled in something and I hears him fall flat. A rack full of brooms falls with an awful racket and a minute later here comes the figure of a man crawling along the floor.

This party is winded and so scared that he wheezes. I hears him feeling around inside the safe, and then he says out loud:

"Too late! The dirty, low-down burglars!"

And then he crawls back to the window and goes out. By his voice it's Jewelry Jones.

Then I crawls out behind him and went home. There ain't nothing left to guard, so why set there and wait for morning? Magpie ain't there, so I goes to bed. He's cooking breakfast when I wakes up in the morning.

"Have a quiet night?" he asks.

"Well, I didn't have no cause to assassinate anybody. Play poker?"

"Uh-huh."

He spins a half-cooked flap-jack up to the ceiling, and just then the door opens and Wick Smith comes in. Wick ain't all smiles—not by a million tickles.

"Sheriff," says he, "you says to me last night that you're going to give me the protection of the law. Where is said protection?"

"That's him, Wick," pointing at me, "he guards you and yours safe from harm."

"He does like ——!" snaps Wick and Magpie misses the next flop.

"Meaning which?"

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"The post-office was robbed last night."

"My gosh!" grunts Magpie. "Did they get that letter?"

"Not that one, Magpie. This morning my store looks like a cyclone had been showing off in there; the safe is open and everything is gone."

"Blowed?" asks Magpie, but Wick shakes his head.

"Nope. I remembers shutting it just when Art Miller comes in to buy some horse liniment, and I can't seem to remember whether I turns the combine. Anyway she's wide open and cleaned out. There was a registered letter with five thousand dollars' worth of bonds in it from the Cattlemen's Bank, which were going to Great Falls. Old man Whittaker knows about it and he's plumb up in the air My gosh, ain't you going to do nothing but look at that spilled pan-cake?"

"You didn't see nor hear anything while you sets outside there, Ike?" asks Magpie.

"While I sets there I don't hear a danged thing. Not a thing."

"Must 'a' been done by a experienced burglar, Wick," opines Magpie.

"More like a section hand," grunts Wick. "They knocked down everything that wasn't already on the floor. By grab, you better do something, sheriff, to save your honor."

"He ain't my honor," says Magpie, looking at me. "He's my deputy."

Wick goes back up town, talking to himself, while me and Magpie finishes our breakfast.

Magpie pushes back from the table and rolls a cigaret.

"Ike," says he, "go get that burglar."

"You sure do have the best ideas, Magpie," says I sarcastic-like, and then I went up-town, leaving him to clean up the shack.

Up at Wick's store I finds Dirty Shirt buying some cartridges from Mrs. Smith. Then me and him went out and stood on the steps.

"Post-office got robbed last night," says I.

"Gosh, this is a awful sinful place, Ike," says he. "Didn't get anything?"

"Five thousand dollars."

Dirty grabbed for a post and slid down on the steps.

"Dizzy streak," he explains foolish-like. "What did you say, Ike?"

"Out of the safe, Dirty. Who do you reckon done it?"

"My ——! How should I know, Ike?"

Just then we sees Mighty Jones plugging down the street. He stops in front of us and glares at Dirty.

"Post-office got robbed last night, Mighty," says I.

"Yeah? Robbed? Nothing in there for a robber."

"Not now," I agrees. "But there was last night—five thousand."

"Five thou——" Mighty stumbles and sets down beside us and wipes his face.

"Dollars?" he asks. "In the safe?"

"Uh-huh. Gone this morning. I'm hun - ng for the burglar."

"Hmff! says he and glares at Dirty Shirt.

Dirty glares right back at him, and just then we sees Jewelry ride up to the hitch-rack and get off his bronc. He looks over at us, hitches up his belt and comes sauntering over.

"You misguided Jones family misfit still trying to corral my mail?" he asks mean-like.

Dirty and Mighty just gives him a look, and he sets down.

"I'm here to demand my rights," says he. "My mind is made up today."

"Maybe you can buy that letter, Jewelry," suggests Dirty. "You ought to be well heeled this morning."

"What do you mean, feller?"

"Speaking of the five thousand dollars which was taken out of the post-office safe last night," says Dirty monotonous-like.

"Five thousand dollars which——" Jewelry's voice trails off to a whisper and he peers at us for confirmation.

"Out of the safe last night," says I.

"Any clue?" asks Jewelry scared-like.

"Yeah," says I, deliberate like, "the feller lost his knife."

I seen three hands twitch toward pants-pockets, and then three hands comes back.

"What kind of a knife?" whispers Dirty, but I shakes my head.

"Talk's about sending for a detective," says I. "He'll find out."

"During which the burglar will leave," grins Jewelry foolish-like.

"Which proves his guilt and causes the machinery of the law to grind a little faster," says I. "Ain't you fellers decided about that letter yet?"

"Pardon me," says Mrs. Smith and we all turns to where she stands in the door of the store. "Has any of you gents a pocket-

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knife I can use for a minute? Wicksie is gone and I want to cut a piece of rope for Mr. Miller."

"Haw!" says Jewelry with his mouth open like a fish out of water. "As I—I was saying, I'm in a awful hurry, folks. *Adios.*"

"Just a mo-moment," says Mighty, follering in his footsteps. "I wants to talk with you about them yearling calves you spoke about."

The two of them pilgrims over to the rack, gets on their broncs, and both rides different directions.

"Knife, ma'am?" asks Dirty, like she had spoken of some prehistoric freak. "To—to cut a rope with?"

"I could use the ax," says she.

"Yes'm," agrees Dirty. "It—it don't haggle so much. Yes'm." And Dirty went over, got on his bronc and rode out of Piperock.

Then I went up to the bank. Old man Whittaker is there and he squints at me as I leans over the counter.

"Detectin'?" he asks mean-like.

"Possibly. Nice bank you got here."

"What do you care?" he asks. "Gol dingle-danged town! Robbing post-offices, et cettery. Worse than living in the East."

THE old pelican glares at me like I was to blame and then walks to the far end of the room. There's a little box just around the corner of the cashier's cage, so when the old man turns I slips that letter out of my pocket and drops it into that box.

"Don't you want me to catch the thief?" I asks, and he whirls around.

"No!" he yelps, "All I want is them gol dingle-danged bonds! If I put all the thieves in this county in jail there wouldn't be anybody left to transact banking business with."

"That wouldn't handicap you none," says I, "'cause there wouldn't be any bankers out of jail to run the banks." And then I walked out.

Along in the middle of the afternoon I goes into Buck's place. Buck is leaning over the bar, staring at Dirty Shirt, Mighty and Jewelry, who are setting around a card-table, whittling like they was making a living at it. Buck looks at the floor and then at the whittlers.

"Say, you locoed loafers will have to sweep out this place," says he. "What do you think I'm running—a carpenter shop?"

"I love to whittle with my old knife," says Mighty, testing the blade on his thumb.

"There's a knife," says Dirty, holding it out for us to see, "that is a knife. She's about ten-year old and I never owned any other. Razor steel."

"Ten years ain't much when you're speaking of the age of a knife," opines Jewelry, "this old knife of mine was handed down to me by my paw, who had it given to him at his first birthday. I've used it continuous ever since."

"Speaking of knives," says I, "reminds me of Wick. He found his own knife on the floor and thought he had a burglar clue."

Then three Jones' stares at me until I gets uncomfortable, but just then the stage comes in, and we all pilgrims over to the post-office. We stands around while Wick distributes a few mail-order catalogues and then Mighty walks up to the window.

"Wick Smith, you've got a letter for me?" he asks.

"Nope," says Wick and Mighty looks displeased a heap.

Dirty walks over and peers inside.

"Nope," says Wick. "Nor for Jewelry. Nothing for the Joneses."

"Now about that letter of mine which arrived yesterday," says Dirty. "Suppose she's serious-like, Wick? Maybe she's life or death. Under them circumstances I can sue you to beat four of a kind."

"Same here," nods Mighty. "I asks you before these folks as witness that you give it to me. In fact, I demands it. You can't refuse a de-mand, Wick."

"Can't I?" asks Wick, and then he produces a sawed-off shotgun. "Can't I, Mighty?"

"You can—yes," admits Mighty, "but it makes me ashamed of you for it."

"I ain't making no de-mands, Wick," states Jewelry when Wick looks at him. "Not in the face of present conditions. I'll e-ventually get what belongs to me, but right now ain't e-ventually."

"Could you fellers get any idea who that letter belongs to if I was to show you the envelope?" asks Wick. "There's a name in the corner."

"I'd *sabe* it in a minute, Wick," states Dirty. "Show it to me."

"Not alone!" snaps Mighty. "All in a bunch and no favors asked."

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Wick snaps open his money till and fumbles underneath.

"I didn't put it in the safe," says he, as he pulls out a envelope and wipes it on his overalls. "Now you fellers keep your hands off, and I'll give you all a look."

He holds the letter in both hands and leans his elbows on the counter. We all crowds up to see.

"Well," says Dirty awed-like. "I may be goshawful ignorant, gents, but I can't read A. C. Jones, E-squire out of First National Bank of Great Falls."

Wick turns that envelope over and steps back. He puts it up to his nose and saws her back and forth like he was looking for a good place to bite into it.

"My gosh!" he whoops. "I—I done mixed them two letters! I must 'a' put that danged Jones letter into the safe instead of the bonds."

"And," says Mighty, "somebody stole my letter."

"That letter of mine entrusted to your careless care," accuses Dirty; "that letter which you refuses to divulge to me. I'll sue you higher than a kite, postmaster."

"You're accessory to a thief, Wick," declares Jewelry. "You and the President would 'a' dodged a lot of trouble and tribulations if you'd a handed me my mail as soon as she came in. I begins to sue you today, feller."

"You know what I'm going to do?" asks Wick. "Know what? I'm going to give you all one minute to get out of that door and out of my sight."

Wick cocks both barrels of that old destroyer and lays his watch on the counter.

"Well," says Jewelry, "under them circumstances, Wick, there ain't nothing to wait for." And them three Jones' hit the narrow door together and fought their way out. Somebody had to suffer, and there's nothing like keeping such things as that in the family.

JEWELRY was the first one to break loose, and I reckon he still retained a shred of memory, 'cause he didn't lose no time going away from there. He ain't go no shirt left, but his feet are still in working order.

Mighty and Dirty sure took each other to pieces and might have kept at it indefinitely, but Wick Smith's yearling coyote got the idea that it was put on for its especial benefit and proceeded to cut button-holes in the remaining Jones' pants, which served to bust up the party.

Mighty points right up the street, but Dirty gets mad and seems to retaliate to the best of his ability. But his aim is poor and the coyote don't suffer none, being as most of the lead sifts into the store windows, causing me and Wick to burrow under a counter.

One .44 hunk of lead hives up in Wick's stock of patent-medicines and me and him got an external dose of everything from cod-liver oil to Epsom salts. Another one pokes into a box of shotgun shells, the same of which causes some discomfort while they lasts. Then we crawls out and sets on the counter.

"For something what ain't never been read, that letter is causing a heap of scandal," observes Wick, looking at the disaster around us. "Wonder who got that letter, Ike? Anyway, I'm plumb glad she's off my hands, 'cause them three snake-hunters might get troublesome over it."

We hears a few shots up the street after while, and here comes Dirty Shirt, walking backwards, throwing lead from two guns. He backs right into the door before he sees us, but Wick has him covered and he drops his guns.

"Well," says Wick, "I see you've come back, Dirty."

"Beyond the shadder of a single doubt," agrees Dirty, peering out of the window and getting his eyes filled with splinters when a bullet cuts a furrow in the sash.

Dirty grabs one of his guns off the floor and bangs away through the window. I seen Magpie go hippety hopping across the street and sprawl down behind Pete Gonyer's blacksmith shop.

"You shooting at Magpie?" I asks.

"Persons don't count, Ike," says he, stuffing in fresh shells.

"He represents the law," says I. "What's the trouble, Dirty?"

"That danged letter!" he snaps.

Pow! A bullet comes through the window, skids off the head of a pick and makes a billiard against the sweat-band of Dirty's hat.

Dirty shakes his head, does sort of a half-hearted shuffle with his feet and sets down on the floor, where he bobs his head like a chicken picking up wheat.

"One baby down—one se-gar," says Wick.

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Dirty looks up at us foolish-like and then sings sweet and low:

"For we're all growing fee-bul, o-o-ld and gray Mag-e-e-e-e-e, and the-e-e— What in —— hit me?"

"That's what I'd call hitting a feller in a tenor spot, Ike," grins Wick. "Sing some more, Dirty."

"Did—did I get hit?" asks Dirty, feeling of his head.

"I'd call it a danged close miss," states Wick.

"Tell us what it's about, Dirty Shirt," I suggests, and he sort of shakes his head to get rid of the stars.

"That letter causes it," says he, in the tone of a feller who has a dismal past to disclose. "I—I want that letter. Somebody stole my mail. *Sabe?* Well, I went up to Judge Steele and I says, 'I want to swear out a warrant for Mighty and Jewelry, charging them with stealing my mail.'

" 'You do?' " says he, " 'I'd 'a' saved a lot of paper and ink if I'd 'a' had you all put in jail yesterday. Mighty has swore out a warrant for you and Jewelry, and Jewelry has swore out one for you and Mighty. Seems like a case of the Jones family hanging together.' "

"Everybody is shooting at everybody else, eh?" says I.

"Something like that. Me and Mighty and Jewelry are shooting at each other, and Magpie ain't playing no certain one. Gee cripes, I've got a headache!"

Dirty gets his other gun and crawls over to the window. Me and Wick ain't got nothing to do with it, so we remains neutral.

All to once comes a rattle of shots up the street and we both stampedes to the window. Here comes Jewelry on a bronc. He seems to have mounted in a hurry, without picking up his reins or tightening his cinch. We sees his hat hop high off his head and the next jump that bronc makes the saddle goes back to its rump and the cinch hangs in its flank.

Jewelry is pulling leather with both hands and the bronc is pitching straight for the store.

Magpie don't seem to want to lose any of his future boarders, 'cause he runs out into the street and waves his hat at that crazy bronc. I hears Dirty's gun-roar beside me and I sees Magpie's feet flip out from under him and the bronc come merrily on its way.

The store has a porch about three feet above the ground, and while that roan sure can go high and handsome he's a few inches short of hitting the top.

Right there that bronc stands on its head, the cinch busts, and the way Jewelry has of coming into that store was no trouble for anybody. He lit on his neck, still hanging on to that saddle, knocks Wick's feet from under him with one of the stirrups and don't stop sliding until he jambs up against the front of the post-office.

Wick lays there and hammers his feet on the floor. Jewelry gets up, bumps his head on the little ledge where they pass out the mail and sets down again. Then he gets up, walks circles like a tired hound until he's dizzy. Then he leans against the front of the post-office and says in a voice as thin as a cigaret paper:

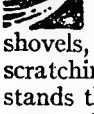
"I—I want that letter. I—I want——" Then he slides down in a heap over his saddle.

Wick sets up and looks around. Then he staggers to his feet, picks up his shotgun and announces—

"I'm—I'm going—to kik—kill somebody——"

He steps out of the door just as a bullet whistles inside and smashes into a showcase. He stumbles back in and leans against the counter.

"—pretty soon," he finishes.



I SETS there, out of line with that window, and enjoys the show. Dirty leans against a rack of shovels, trying hard to light a match by scratching a cigaret on his pants. Wick stands there with a big blue lump over one eye, trying to work the loading-lever, the same of which ain't never been put on any double-barreled shotgun I ever seen. He goes through all the motions, and from the smile on his face she's working great.

I hears a noise behind me and turns in time to see Mighty crawl into one of the windows, balance on the sill for a moment and then fall inside with a muffled crash.

He stays down for a while and then comes weaving into view, covered with flour. He stands there with a fool look on his face and then crooks his finger at Wick.

"C'mere," says he, goggle-eyed as an old owl, and Wick staggers up to him. He wags his finger in Wick's face and says:

"Ah, ha, dang you! Give me my letter."

Him and Wick stares into each other's

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eyes for a moment, and then Wick nods his head, grasps that riot-gun in both hands and raises it up. Mighty seen that gun rise above his head, 'cause I seen him look up at it, but he just grins up at it; then it comes down on his bare head and he sets down right in his tracks.

Wick looks down at him, nods his head like he was satisfied and stands there with the butt of that gun resting on his stummick and his fingers wrapped lovingly around both triggers.

"Wick!" yells Magpie's voice from the doorway.

Wick jerks his hand nervous-like and pulls both triggers.

That gun almost busted my ear-drums. I seen Wick double up like a jack-knife, expell a terrific "Whoof!" and slide down beside Mighty.

Magpie looks at me mean-like and steps inside.

"You're a —— of a deputy!" he snorted. "Why didn't you stop 'em?"

"You didn't see any of 'em getting away, did you?" I asks.

He peers around the place and strokes his mustache.

Jewelry is the first to get up. He crawls to his feet and staggers up to the counter where Mighty and Wick are laying. He looks at them disinterested-like and crawls up on the counter, where he humps over and looks down at them like a buzzard examining a meal.

Dirty happens to notice Magpie about this time. He rubs his head, brushes some dust off his cuff and clears his throat.

"Nice day," he observes.

"Uh-huh," admits Magpie, lifting up his right foot and pointing at a heel which has been shot plumb off. "What have you got to say about that, Dirty Shirt Jones?"

"——!" whispers Dirty, shaking his head. "Don't ask me—I'm no cobbler."

"You shot that off, feller!" snorts Magpie.

"Did I?" asks Dirty, "Need practise—bad. Shot at your head, Magpie."

Mighty crawls to his feet and leans against Jewelry's knees for a moment and peers up into Jewelry's staring face. Then he looks down at Wick.

"Dead and in ——!" he wails. "Killed accidental!"

Wick rolls over and looks around. Then he takes hold of Mighty's legs and hauls himself up. The three of them looks at each other and then Wick rubs his eyes.

"What you doing here?" he asks, peering at Mighty.

"Mail," whispers Mighty, "mail which belongs to A. C. Jones, E-squire."

"It—it ain't here," stammers Wick. "Didn't you steal it?"

"Nope. Maybe Dirty Shirt did."

"Do I look like I did?" asks Dirty. "Do I look like I had got what I wanted last night? What do you reckon I've been fighting about today? I'm here to collect my lawful mail."

"Say, Wick," says a voice at the door, and old man Whittaker trots in. "I don't know how in thunder this letter gets into a box at the bank. It don't belong to me."

He hands a letter to Wick and starts out.

"Say, Whittaker, I didn't lose them bonds," states Wick, producing the letter out of his inside vest pocket. "I—I mixed it up with another letter. *Sabe?*"

Old Man Whittaker grabbed that letter, read the address and walked out, talking to himself like a shepherd.

We all stares at each other and Dirty licks his lips.

"A. C. Jones, E-squire?" he asks.

"No matter who it's for," says Magpie, "you three are under arrest. *Sabe?* That danged letter has caused too much ——!"

Just then a stranger walks into the store and looks around.

"You the proprietor?" he asks, looking at Magpie.

Magpie shakes his head and points at Wick.

"Thanks," says he, and then to Wick, "I've got a little bill of goods made out here which I'd like to have filled. I'm on my way over to Powder River to buy sheep for a syndicate and will likely be through here several times. Had my mail forwarded here. Anything showed up?"

"What name?" asks Wick.

"Jones."

"A. C.?" asks Wick.

The stranger nods.

"E-squire?" gasps Dirty.

"Well," says he, grinning, "it might be inscribed thataway."

Them three Jones' stares at each other and then at Wick, as he produces that letter. The stranger hands Wick a list of grub stuff, leans against the counter and seems to peruse that letter; then he wads up the contents and throws it on the floor.

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"Be back pretty soon," says he and goes outside and over towards Buck's.

Right then the three Jones' fell off the counter and lands on that wad of paper all in a tangle.

"Halt!" yelps Magpie, prying 'em apart with his gun. "What you fellers trying to do—start it all over again? Give me that letter!"

They glances at Magpie's gun and surrenders the paper.

Magpie unfolds it and peers at the contents. Then he looks at them three Jones'.

"Well?" says Dirty anxious-like.

"Yes," says Magpie wise-like, "it could easy 'a' been for either of you three. Most any Jones I ever knew would be interested in this letter. Read it for yourselves."

He hands it to Dirty and the rest of us stretches our necks a foot to read the big black letters written across the top:

MILLER'S SHEEP-DIP IS THE BEST

We don't read any further. Them Jones' sort of shrinks all over.

"My gosh!" gasps Jewelry. "I wonder what E-squire means?"

"As near as I can figure," says Magpie, "it's a society name for shepherd."

"Which goes to prove," proclaims Wick, "that the Jones tribe has received inside information."

The Jones tribe shook hands and agreed.

GERONIMO, NOTED APACHE CHIEF

A BIT OF THE OLD WEST

by E. A. BRININSTOOL

"THE worst Indian that ever lived," is the characteristic title applied to Geronimo—pronounced Her-ron-e-mo—most famous Apache war-chieftain, by Gen. Miles. Certain it is that before the wily Apache was run to earth in March, 1886, by Gen. George Crook, he had cost the Government millions of dollars, and hundreds of lives had been sacrificed. However, after Geronimo and his band had surrendered to Crook, in company with Natchez, a sub-chief, Geronimo escaped, but was finally rounded-up by Gen. Miles again later in the year.

The best data obtainable shows that seventy-six white men, women and children were killed by Geronimo and his band in the last raid by these scourges of the desert, while in 1869-1870 it is on record that one hundred and seventy-six persons were murdered, and a decade before, in the six years between 1856 and 1862, four hundred and twenty-five persons fell victims to the murderous Apaches, most of them killed by Geronimo and bands under various sub-chiefs.

After Miles succeeded Crook in Arizona, he offered a reward for every Apache killed, fifty dollars being the price of an ordinary brave, while Geronimo, dead or alive, was to bring two thousand dollars to his slayer or captor. In spite of these measures, however, the prediction of a speedy end to the Apache War was not verified. Miles was in command just twenty-one weeks before Geronimo was hemmed in and forced to surrender.

Geronimo and his band were run down on the Yaqui River, in a country almost impassable to man or beast. Various attempts to dodge the troops were tried, but to no purpose. The Apaches were hemmed in, and at last Geronimo agreed to surrender to Gen. Miles, and then, for the first time, it was discovered that there were but eighteen bucks and a few women left with Geronimo.

The news of his capture spread rapidly about the whole section of country which had suffered so severely from his depredations, and there was rejoicing everywhere. Miles was flooded with congratulatory telegrams, and never was the surrender of so small a force deemed of more vital importance to the United States. The Apaches had been pursued a distance of more than two thousand miles, during which time they were kept constantly on the move and allowed no chance for rest or the opportunity to obtain food. The band was completely worn out, and nothing but this fact brought them at last to subjugation.

The whole bunch were sent to Florida as prisoners of war. They were finally transferred to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, in 1894, where Geronimo died February 17, 1909. His exact age was not known, but it is said that he was not far from ninety years of age at the time of his death.

At Fort Sill, Geronimo had ample time to satisfy his one whim—playing poker. He was an inveterate gambler, and in a poker game was said to be a dangerous opponent.

Geronimo had six wives, whom he supported well. He had one daughter, Eva, whom he sent to an Eastern school where she was well educated.

In March, 1902, Geronimo took a sudden idea into his head that he wanted to be a good Indian, but behind all this was his desire to be set free again—a suggestion which sent shivers up and down the backs of the old-timers in Arizona and New Mexico. However, his request was not complied with, as it was well known that the foxy Apache was a man not to be trusted, and he continued as a "resident" of Fort Sill until his spirit sought the Happy Hunting-grounds of his ancestors.

In 1908 Geronimo made a trip to Washington with a number of his followers in an effort to interest President Roosevelt in his case. However, Roosevelt knew the Indian character too well to grant the desires of the Apache chieftain, and Geronimo left in disgust, and to the last he remained full of hatred for the white man.

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Author of "Flat Behind The Ears," "A Game of Get Even," etc.

JERRY FAY has a wonderful parlor in his home. Mrs. Fay is almost as proud of it as of Jerry Jr. She dreamed and planned this parlor and bought its furnishings with money saved from Jerry's pay. Her hand hung the blue velvet draperies upon the windows; her eye selected the carpet with the pattern of yellow roses in green squares; her lively, combative taste decided upon the six red-plush chairs that are evenly spaced around the walls. Everything and everybody that enters the parlor must first pass Molly Fay's critical inspection and bear the seal of her approval. It would be as much as Jerry's life is worth for him to wander in there in week-day garb and rest his work-weary bones in the big rocker. He tried it only once.

Even the pictures that hang upon the walls have been chosen by Mrs. Fay. Three of these pictures are of large size and they form the centers, upon the windowless walls, about which the many minor decorations are grouped. To the right, in a glistening gold frame, hangs a crayon of Jerry Jr. at the age of six months. To the left is a golden-framed picture of the Virgin. Until very recently the rear wall was embellished by a brilliant lithographic likeness of America's famous soldier-knight, General Pershing, mounted upon a white circus charger and holding aloft in his good right hand the standard of his country.

The other evening I called upon the Fays. Since I had not been there for months, Molly made a state occasion of my visit and ushered me into the parlor instead of the kitchen. The first thing I noticed, to my great surprize, was the absence of the general. The frame was still on the wall, but the soldier had disappeared from it. In his place, of all things in the world, was one of Jerry Fay's work tools. Actually, behind the glass of the frame, reposing upon a bed of white satin, was a long, rat-tailed, alligator-jawed, iron wrench. Nor was it a new, gleaming tool; it was a rusty, disreputable looking wrench with the grime of the shipyard still upon it. The satin along its tail was stained with grease. All in all, it was a queer looking parlor ornament; nor was its exotic effect lessened by the silk American flag that was draped over the top of the frame.

"What is it, Molly?" I demanded.

"Wait till Jerry gets here," she responded. "It's a long story and fit to raise the hair on your head. I misdoubt he lies much about it. He went down to the corner to get the beer when we saw you coming; he'll be back in a moment. I know it is a strange thing to be hanging in the parlor of a lady as particular as I am, but, strange or not, there it hangs and there it will stay. I'd rather have that blessed old wrench upon the wall than a German helmet or a half-dozen generals. But here comes himself; he'll tell you about it."

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Imagine the entrance of an overalled, open-shirted, callous-palmed workman with a quid in his cheek, a double negative upon his tongue, and a can of beer in his hand. Then dismiss the picture from your mind, for it bears no resemblance to Jerry Fay.

Jerry brought the beer in a suitcase, wore his second-best $60 suit, and his English, when he talked, was as good as yours or mine and better than that of the average college student.

Let me introduce him, and then get on with the story.

Jerry Fay is American with an Irish background, a public school education, and a shop training that began where the second year of high schoool left off. He can take large, flat, steel plates and fashion them into almost anything you ask for. Or he can—and always does—make a neat speech at the annual banquet and ball of the Mission Harmony Club. He is well read, intelligent, takes an active interest in the affairs of his union, makes fifty dollars a week without overtime and wants more. He is more familiar with abstract ideas, and possesses a larger vocabulary, than the ordinary business man; and upon Thursday evenings it is his custom to express his mind before a critical audience of a thousand or so fellow-craftsmen. Today Jerry is that enviable personage, a skilled American mechanic; tomorrow he will be a first-class foreman or a first-class politician, as circumstances decree. Today, or tomorrow, he is a loyal friend and a good scout.

"NO, THE wrench didn't save my life," said Jerry. "That is, not directly. Indirectly it saved a good many lives, perhaps mine included. It also saved Uncle Sam some ships at a time when he needed ships. I'll say that this old rat-tail of mine did more to win the war than a regiment in France. That is why it hangs on the wall here. It was my own wrench all its life. But before I tell the story, I want you to look at it closely."

Jerry got up from his chair, lifted the frame from the wall and placed it across my knees.

"You will observe," said Jerry, "that it is a wrench that has seen hard graft."

I said that was apparent.

"And you will notice the nicks in the jaws of it," he went on.

I noticed them. They were plain enough. Hard usage had worn nearly smooth the teeth of the jaws, and there were several deep scratches in the steel.

"Those nicks made what the boys called 'Fay's trade-mark' on anything they touched," explained Jerry.

I wanted to know if this fact had anything to do with life and ship saving.

"Yes, keep it in mind," he answered.

He rehung the picture frame upon the wall and resumed his chair.

"All during last year," began Jerry, "up to admission day, when the wrench over there took a hand in the game, mishaps kept occurring in the yard with a disturbing frequency—accidents, you know. I don't mean the ordinary accidents such as always happen in a shipyard. We had our full share of them, God knows, and many a poor lad was killed or maimed during the mad rush with which we knocked the hulls together, but these accidents are all in the day's work.

"I mean a different kind of accident—the kind that kept the Secret Service on the jump and made us fellows on the job think that the newspaper talk about shipbuilders being the "first line of defense" was not all bunk. Such an accident, for instance, as Hull 360 collapsing in her cradle and killing a half-dozen upstanding lads. It was discovered that some of the big timbers of the cradle had been half sawed through.

"Then there was the near-accident that happened during the Fourth of July launchings. I myself had a hand in the launching, praise be! It was sheer luck. Hull 339 was to be launched at noon. I was working all morning on board a destroyer that was tied up to the dock. About ten minutes to twelve I knocked off and came ashore to see the show. I was walking along the wharf-edge when I noticed what looked like a telephone cable leading out from under the wharf toward the ways that contained 339.

"Only a few feet of the cable showed above water. If it had been any place else along the length of the wharf, I should not have noticed it. It happened, however, that I had been working at that exact spot the day before. There had been no telephone cable there then.

" 'What's that cable doing there?' I said to 'Limey,' my helper.

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" 'Nothing bad that Hi can see,' answered Limey.

" 'It wasn't there yesterday,' I said. 'I think I'll speak to Bush about it.' Bush is my foreman.

"Limey was dead against this.

" 'E'll only larf at us,' he protested. 'It's just a telephone cyble.'

"But Bush came along just then and I hailed him. He looked at the cable and jumped down under the wharf. A moment later we heard him swear—then a shot.

"Both I and Limey dove under the wharf. For a moment we couldn't see anything because we had come out of sunshine into gloom. But we heard Bush reflecting aloud and, looking around, discovered him in the water, hanging to a pile. We hauled him up on the stringpiece, and there he sat for a moment, looking at his hand and swearing most beautifully. The end of one of his fingers was shot clean away.

" 'He took a shot at me and cleared out!' said Bush.

" 'Did you see 'im?' cried Limey?

" 'Sure I saw him,' answered Bush.

" 'Can you recognize the blighter?' demanded Limey, becoming more excited.

" 'I didn't see his face, but he had on blue overalls,' said Bush.

" 'Gorblimme, there's ten thousand blue overalls walking around this bloomin' yard,' was Limey's reply.

"It wasn't much of a description, you'll admit. We hustled around underneath the wharf, poking into dark corners, but the fellow had disappeared.

" 'What was he doing down here?' I asked.

"Bush pointed to the pressure tank. A little platform of boards had been laid on top of the tank, and on top of the platform was a little square box. I knew what it was as soon as I saw it—a battery box such as they use to set off blasts. Bush had already disconnected the end of the telephone cable from the battery.

" 'It can't go off now,' says Limey, 'but Hi'll duck around to the ways and 'old up the launching.' And off he went, full speed.

"But Bush and I didn't wait for Limey to give the word. We tumbled up on the wharf and hailed a Navy quartermaster on the deck of the destroyer. He wigwagged the ways and stopped the ceremony with five minutes to spare. Lucky he did, for Limey sprained his ankle and didn't show up at the ways until five minutes after the hull was to have taken the water.

"Then we notified the Secret Service men, of whom plenty were about, Heaven knows. It was strict orders that whenever anything queer was discovered about the yard, no alarm was to be given—just a few words in undertone into the right ears. This was the reason we had not raised an outcry.

"Our connection with the affair ended right there. Though we did learn that the other end of that cable was fast to a nice, big shiny ball at the foot of the ways, which would have made Hull 339 kiss the sky as soon as she kissed the water.

"THIS was just one of the off-color 'accidents' that kept happening in the United Plant; though it was about the boldest and most elaborate accident I knew about, until this other 'accident,' the last of them, happened on admission day, September ninth. Between the two dates, however, these little mishaps kept occurring ever more frequently. Of course no word of them got into the newspapers, and they were not advertised in the yard itself, but you can't stop the tongues of thousands of men.

"We in the S. A. department knew almost as soon as it happened that the explosion in the copper shop was 'queer.' That was a clever 'accident.' A length of big pipe was plugged with resin, filled with a drum of gasoline and plugged at the other end. How it was accomplished with scores of men around, no one could imagine. But when a poor devil of a coppersmith hung that pipe up in chains and turned a torch upon it to anneal it, he wrote his own death warrant and that of three other good lads as well.

"The timekeeper on Hull 360 found a tobacco tin in the drawer of his desk. He pried off the cover with a screw-driver, it being glued on, as he afterwards found, and discovered the tin to be filled with dynamite and black powder, with a broken match lying on top. I myself saw him streaking like a madman for the main office. Only the breaking of that match saved him and the ship.

"Then 'Bumping Betsy,' as the plate-hangers called their traveling yard-crane, dropped two ton of plates into the bay. It was found that the big iron hook that

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broke had been eaten through by some acid. Another time I was in the machine shop when Swift, the foreman, threw a fit because his biggest and best turret-lathe had been put out of commission by a too expert hand.

"All these things had effect upon the work. We were breaking records in ship-building at the United Plant, but we would have broken more of them had it not been for this —— treachery in our midst. A fellow couldn't be sure when he stepped out upon a staging, or worked beneath a crane, that he was getting an even break. Any one will take the risks of his trade without thinking much about them, but this back stabbing business gets upon the nerves.

"We knew there was a gang at work in the yard, a fiendishly clever gang which hesitated at nothing to accomplish its end. This end, it was plain, was the slowing up of the yard's production by the destruction of both life and property. It got so a fellow was suspicious of every one he looked at, unless he knew the man's past and all about him. Whenever a couple of fellows got together you could be sure they were relieving their feelings and comparing notes.

"I know how everybody sleuthed during those days; I was president of my union at the time, and the men in my trade would bring reports to me which I turned over to the Government men. I know for a fact that some men were discovered with corners on their heads and too loose tongues; they were promptly marched out through the gate, bound for an internment camp. Still the 'accidents' kept recurring. In a way, they had our goats. After thinking about it, more than once I sat down and swore for five minutes straight, just to relieve my feelings. And Limey, my helper—well, there is no describing the language that Limey used.

"This Limey was an Englishman from London. He was a thin, scrawny little man, all yellow teeth and cockney accent—a good, handy worker. It was only a queer modesty that kept him from drawing down a mechanic's pay. More than once I suggested to him that he take out a card and become a journeyman. Lots poorer workers were doing it those days, but he always shook his head. He would rather be my helper and work on the boats, he said. If he became a mechanic they might keep him shut up in a shop, and that he couldn't abide. He was so deft with tools that I was well enough pleased.

"Limey was a talker and a swearer. Good Lord, how he could curse! He was the best long-distance Hun-hater in the yard, and that is saying something. I never heard the Germans hated more thoroughly by anybody, all during the war. He would begin to tell what he thought of them at eight o'clock in the morning and would be still going strong when the whistle blew at twenty minutes to five. He was of military age and never mentioned being a family man, so I asked him one time why he didn't climb into a uniform and work off some of his spite with a bayonet.

" 'Rotten 'eart,' says he. 'Hi've been turned down twice in Canada and three times 'ere in the Stytes when I've tried to join up. This 'ere ship-building is the only w'y Hi can do my bit.'

"Well, he was a good ship-builder, even if just a helper, so much I'll say for him, and he stayed with me, as my man, right up to the September morning when the last 'accident' took place.

"Admission day, you know, is a legal holiday in California. Thank heaven it is! If a full week-day crowd had been working on the vessel, with every nook and corner containing its crew, and the riveters dropping their red-hot rivets about, nothing could have prevented an explosion and a casualty list as long as your arm. As it was, it was a miracle our calking chisels didn't strike a spark and blow her to —— before I discovered what was up.

"THE boat was one of the big, new-type diving submarines. She was nearly ready for launching, and the bosses were anxious to have her take the water as soon as possible, if not a little sooner. So Porter, Kelly and myself, with Limey as our helper and errand boy, set about celebrating the holiday by calking watertight the double-bottom tanks beneath the submarine's engine-room.

"It is no joke to work in the double-bottom of a big ship, but may the saints keep you out of the double-bottom of a submarine! 'Tis no place for a Christian.

"The double-bottom, which runs the length of the submarine, is a space about eighteen inches high—at its highest—between the ship's inside bottom and the outside bottom. The space is cut up into

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tanks which are used to store ballast and fuel. These tanks, in turn, are subdivided by partitions, or stiffening plates, into many little coffin-like compartments which communicate with each other through holes cut in the stiffening plates. They are beautiful tanks, much blessed by the poor devils who have to put them together.

"They are almost impossible to get into, worse to get out of, and plain —— to work in. You go down through the manhole head first and crawl through the holes in the stiffening plates until you come to the tiny compartment where you are to work—all the while dragging your heavy air-gun and extension light with you. You can't sit up and work. You can't even kneel. You lie on your back or side or stomach, as occasion demands, and drive your rivets or calk your seam. You can't even turn around, if you are bigger than a *gugu*. It feels like being buried. All in all, there isn't a sweeter little job to be found in a shipyard than calking watertight the double-bottom tanks of a submarine.

"There were just the few of us inside the submarine—Porter, Kelly, myself and Limey. On deck were Pat Shea, the government inspector, who was waiting for us to finish the job, and the two Secret Service men who guarded the gangway and kept an eye open to see that suspicious looking characters did not snoop around the hull.

"We three mechanics crawled into as many tanks with our air-guns and started to work. We left Limey alone in the engine room to heed our calls, look after our air and generally wait upon us. I had him waiting upon me almost immediately, for I found my gun was so plugged with iron chips that it would not operate. Limey passed me down a spare one and asked me for my rat-tailed wrench, so that he might, with the sharp tail of it, dig the chips out of the disabled tool. I passed the wrench up to him and went on with my work.

"About an hour later occurred the little incident which, I believe, was responsible for the saving of my life and the lives of my companions in the other tanks. I was conscious of feeling drowsy, but this did not bother me. The air is always bad in these tanks, and if you stay down very long your head is bound to swell and feel heavy. Still, it is such a terrible job getting in and out of the holes that, once down, you hang on like grim death until the job is finished. I didn't intend coming up until I was through with the tank.

"I had to roll over into a new position and I shut off my gun. Suddenly it was very quiet. I couldn't hear the rattle of Porter's or Kelly's chisels upon the iron. I wondered if they also happened to be changing position at that very instant. I strained my ears to catch the sound of their bodies scraping over the iron. You see, being in one of these tanks is so like being immured in a tomb that any sound that indicates life is comforting.

"I heard a sound. It didn't come from the other tanks. It came from beneath me—from outside. Somebody was down in the ways, lightly tapping upon the outside skin of the ship. The sound aroused me. I felt sure it was just some inspector fooling around out there—but there was just a drop of doubt in my sureness—on edge, you see. Too many 'accidents.' The tapping ceased and did not recur, but it left me wide awake.

"I lay a moment, resting. I thought the air in the tank smelled extraordinarily sour. From this thought my mind jumped to a lecture I had heard a few days before; a fellow back from France had talked to us in the yard, at noon hour, and described the Hun gas, particularly the mustard gas—how it smelled, tasted and felt. Thinking of the mustard gas made me more critical of the bad air I was breathing. When I picked up my gun to resume work, I opened it up with the intention of blowing out the tank with fresh air from the hose.

"The result was startling. When I pressed the trigger, there shot up into my face, from the exhaust, an invisible stream of something that strangled me and caused my eyes to begin to rain tears. I dropped the gun, choking and coughing, and cried like a baby. I wasn't puzzled any longer about the sourness of the air. I knew what caused it. It was gas—plain illuminating gas, and it was coming out of my air-gun!

"As I started to get out of that tank, I discovered that nearly all my strength had deserted me. I could hardly drag myself along. I had to crawl through two compartments to reach the manhole, a distance of about eight feet, and I never made a harder, longer journey in my life. When at last I did reach the manhole and

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started to straighten up, it seemed as if the weight of the ship was upon my shoulders.

"I squirmed through the opening and fell upon the engine-room floor. My lungs were burning up. I gulped the air and discovered that the engine-room was also filled with the gas, though it was not nearly so strong as in the double bottom. I made the ladder and tumbled out upon deck. Oh, but didn't that first breath of clean air taste good! I felt it in my toes.

"I guess I was a startling figure with my knees wobbling beneath me and my eyes streaming tears The two Secret Service men pounced upon me immediately.

" 'What is it?' they demanded.

" 'Gas!' I gasped. 'Come on! We've got to get the other boys out!'

"We dove for the engine-room, the detectives and I. Old Pat Shea came too. As soon as we had our heads inside the hatch we were choking and gasping. I realized how strong the gas was. I bore it better than the others because I was by this time somewhat used to it, I suppose.

"When we got into the engine-room I looked first of all for Limey. I expected to see his unconscious body lying somewhere about. I shouted his name.

" 'He went down the dock for a drink of water,' said Shea.

"So we turned our attention to the lads in the tanks. Kelly was in the starboard tank, forward of the one I had been in, and Porter was in the port tank opposite. I shoved my head through the manhole into Kelly's tank. His light was out, and it was dark down there. The gas seemed thick enough to slice. I called his name, again and again. By and by I heard him moving, and pretty soon I reached down and caught hold of his hair.

"We yanked him out of it then in short order. He couldn't talk; indeed, he could hardly open his eyes. Shea and I took him up to the deck upon our shoulders and laid him down by the gangway. Then I told Shea to run up to the yard hospital and get men and oxygen tanks. He went and I returned below.

"The detectives were trying to fish Porter out of his tank. It was a terrible job. Porter was in the second compartment away from the manhole, just as I had been. He was unconscious. Being a big man, he had to work in the compartment with his legs doubled under him; now he was wedged into the position he occupied when the gas knocked him out. We could reach him, and each of us did in turn, but, having reached him, we could not straighten him out so he could be moved.

"We could stay down there but a short minute before the gas drove us back to the engine-room. It was like working under water; we would take a breath, hold it as long as we could, and then come up for air. We found, too, that the air of the engine room was so impregnated with the gas that we could not breathe it for very long. After the fifth or sixth attempt to dislodge Porter, the three of us had to give up for the time being and ascend to the deck for some revivifying air.

"The deck was deserted, save for Kelly, who was still lying semiconscious by the gangway. We leaned against the conning tower, gasping and searched the dock with our eyes, hoping to see the rescuing party, with oxygen tanks, come into view. There was no sign of them. Indeed, the time was all too short for Pat Shea to have reached the hospital and returned. This 'accident' all happened much more quickly than I am able to tell about it, you understand.

"WE WERE surprized when suddenly we heard Shea's voice. He was shouting down in the ways beneath the ship. His shouts were urgent, and I ran down to him, one of the detectives following me.

"We found Shea underneath the amidship section of the ship's bottom. He was kicking at a pile of rubbish and swearing most soulfully.

" 'The dirthy scut—he got away!' he says as soon as he spied us.

"We wanted to know what was wrong. He pointed to the rubbish and then to a five gallon oil-can that was sitting next to it. I picked up the can. It was full—of gasoline.

"For a moment I felt pretty sick. It struck me all in a heap, as the saying is. You see what nearly happened, don't you? That pile of rubbish and the can of gasoline was another 'accident,' or rather, a part of the main 'accident.' The rubbish was composed of chunks of wood and wads of oily waste, and, when Shea first saw it, it was piled against the bottom of the ship, just beneath the tanks where we had been

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working. You remember the noise I heard? Well, the botton at this spot was not yet water-tight, or air-tight—or flame-tight. And the tanks, indeed the whole hull, was filled with gas!

"Shea told us that when he started off on a run for the hospital, he suddenly remembered the telephone shanty at the end of the dock. He stopped there and rang up the hospital. Then he ran back to the submarine to lend us a hand.

"He was going up the gangway when he heard the noise of some one stumbling down in the ways. He was suspicious, of course, like the rest of us. He dropped down from the gangway as quietly as he could. He found the pile of rubbish, all ready to fire save for pouring on the gasoline, but the 'accident-maker' must have heard him approaching, for he had vanished.

"We swore as powerfully as Shea had sworn. Good reason to. If Shea had not heard that noise and investigated, the hull would have gone to the junk pile instead of into the water, and those of us inside her would soon have been getting wings—or shovels. The detective drew his revolver and sat down upon the gasoline can, to keep guard underneath the boat. Shea and I hurried on board again.

"At the gangway we encountered Limey. He had evidently just returned on board from the end of the dock where he had gone for a drink and, I supposed, a quiet smoke. He was bending over Kelly with a surprized look in his face, demanding to know what was wrong. Kelly, who was still breathing like a fish ashore, could not answer. I gave Limey an inkling of the case in a word. He joined Shea and me in our hurried descent to the engine-room. We intended to have another try at snatching poor Porter out of his coffin.

"We found the other secret service man down there lying unconscious upon the engine-room floor, with his head in the manhole of the double-bottom. He, too, had determined to have another try while I was down in the ways, and the gas had got him as he worked. I sent him up to the deck on Shea's shoulders and told Shea to stay on deck and watch for the rescuing party. Shea was too old a man to stay below. Then Limey and I turned our attention to Porter.

"I'll say this for Limey—he was one game guy! If he had a rotten heart, it didn't give way on him at that moment. I think I have mentioned that he was a little man; he was smaller, indeed, than any of the rest of us. His size allowed him to work with comparative ease in the double-bottom.

"He went down and stayed down so long I was afraid he was overcome. But he wasn't. He came up for air and disappeared again. The second time his head showed through the manhole he told me he had gotten one of Porter's legs straightened out. The water was streaming out of his eyes, and he pawed for air, but he would not come out and allow me to spell him. I was too big a man to do any good down there, he said, which was true enough. And then he went under for the third time.

"When he reappeared again, he was barely able to lift his head into the open. I grabbed him and dragged him out into the engine-room. He collapsed upon the floor, unable to speak, but I knew from his motions and smile that he had accomplished what he set out to do.

"I didn't wait. I swarmed into the tank like a greased eel, and the first thing my hand struck was the heel of Porter's shoe. Limey had not only straightened him out, he had half turned him around and dragged him through the hole in the stiffening plate. I hauled him the rest of the way to the manhole and hoisted him through it. A hard job, but not so hard as was Limey's. I marvel yet how the little man did it.

"Porter was limp and apparently lifeless. I really thought he was dead. In the hospital, later, they worked on him twenty-four hours before he woke up. Limey and I were pretty far gone ourselves and we found it impossible to get Porter upon our shoulders to carry him to the deck. I shouted, but they didn't hear me up above. Limey started up the ladder alone, to summon help, when the rescuing party from the hospital started to come down.

"Well, there was not much more to the affair. Limey and Porter and I were hustled on deck in jig time by the strong, fresh arms. The lads from the beach, with their oxygen, quickly killed the gas below. Kelly and Porter were dumped into an automobile and rushed to the hospital. They wanted Limey and me to go, too, but I refused. I wanted to be in at the

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finish; I wanted to know where that —— gas came from. Limey said he would stick, too.

"WE FOUND out where it came from. Mr. Gatling, the superintendent of the yard, and the little man we all called 'Big Bull' because he bossed the Secret Service men and had a room all to himself in the main office, arrived in a machine. Bush, my foreman, also appeared. Bush had no idea anything was wrong; he just strolled over from the destroyers where he was overseeing, to find out how our work was coming along. Well, I told the three bosses about the gas coming out of my air-gun. A moment's investigation disclosed that it was still coming out of the hose, so the whole gang of us started to follow up the hose.

"The trail led us under the dock to the big pressure tank which supplied the air for the submarine ways. We found that a gas-main which ran close by the air-tank had been tapped and connected up to the tank. It was a neat job of pipe-fitting. The pop-valve of the pressure tank had been unscrewed and a nipple and elbow inserted in its place. A pipe led from this elbow to the gas-main. The pipe was in two pieces, joined together with a union. A neat, workmanlike job.

"We stared at it, the lot of us, in silence. No need for any one to mention the kind of 'accident' this was.

"Then Bush leaned forward and stared closely at the union. He turned a strange face toward me.

"'Fay, look at this!' he exclaimed. His eyes dropped to my belt. 'Where is your wrench?'

"'Where is my wrench?'

"The question startled me, I'll tell you. I took a close squint at the union myself. I almost fainted. There, upon the iron, as plain as the nose upon my face, was 'Fay's trade-mark,' the mark of the jaws of my old wrench. I would have known it among a thousand marks. Bush knew it.

"'My wrench? My wrench?' I muttered and felt of my hip. For a moment I could not remember what I had done with my wrench; then I heard a scuffling noise and looked up. I saw Limey at the edge of the dock, just clambering out of sight.

"'Limey! He's got it! Stop him!' I yelled.

"Limey was beyond reach of any of us, but the little man, Big Bull, put his hand in his coat pocket, and there was a shot. Limey fell down upon the rocks beneath the dock and squirmed about, holding his knee. When Bush and I jumped down to pick him up, he snarled and swore at us—and, by Heaven, his words were not English! In fact all the cockney had disappeared from his face, as if it had been wiped off with a sponge. As we hoisted him up upon the dock, I was thinking that I must have been blind to have worked with the man for nigh a year without noticing how square was his head.

"The wrench dropped out of Limey's belt as we hoisted him into Big Bull's machine. Big Bull drove him away—but not to the hospital. I really know nothing more of the case, but rumor, of course, kept us well posted. I'll say it did! If all the wild stories that were told during the next few days had been collected and shipped to Los Angeles, the movie people would be happy for ten years to come. Out of the mass of rumor, however, a few creditable facts lifted their lonesome heads.

"Limey, 'twas said, was taken to Big Bull's room and given the most awful sweating a man ever received. He was but a wreck of a man when he confessed. He was taken away under guard.

"Then some others disappeared—a timekeeper upon the big cargo boats was seen marching out a side gate, the center of a squad of soldiers; a Swede on the boiler-shop night shift was snatched out into the darkness by two plain-clothed strangers and never returned; a fellow who worked in the joining mill, where there had been fires, was arrested at his work by a lieutenant and two operatives. So it went. It was even whispered, with what truth I know not, that a certain high assistant to Gatling himself left his private office in the big building for a private cell in Alcatraz.

"Anyway, that was the last of the 'accidents,' and I say it was all due to 'Fay's trade-mark' which the blessed wrench left upon the union. Not one of us would ever have suspected Limey otherwise. And that's the reason 'Fay's trade-mark' will hang there, upon the wall, as long as Molly and I have a roof above our heads."

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THE DEATH OF ZARI

By L·PATRICK GREENE

Author of "The Snakes of Zari," "No Evidence," etc.

SAD at heart, Symes, the native commissioner in charge of that district of Rhodesia known as Melefe's, wended his way toward the hut of his friend Zari, the witch-doctor. The glorious African moon was at her fullest and the bush was bathed in her soft light.

A fairy queen is the African moon—no cold, chaste Diana. Under her magic spell the whole landscape becomes a land of delight. The harsh outlines of the boulder-strewn hills are softened into wonderful curves, melting, it seems, into a far-off and dimly visioned infinity. The dew-laden Mapani bushes become so many glorious Christmas trees bedecked with ropes of shimmering pearls. Rocks and fallen trees assume weird fantastic shapes, and, to the timid, a boulder is a crouching lion, a dried twig from the tree a poisonous snake; for this queen of the night is an elfish spirit not above playing tricks with the imaginations of poor mortals.

Down in the valley the river flows on, gurgling an invitation to the forest creatures to come and drink their fill—and to fear not. There they gather: first the large deer—the bush buck, the sable and roan antelope, and then the tiny duikers, the stemboks, only to make way for a herd of klip-springers, the most graceful of all creatures. These latter seem to be totally under the influence of the moon's rays, for as they come to drink they gambol merrily. Here one will leap high into the air, six, nine, twelve feet above his fellows; others advance by a series of wonderful bounds, sailing fifteen feet through the air like an arrow from a bow.

Down-stream a little way, lions are drinking; nor heed they the creatures they habitually prey upon. For they, too, are under the magic of the moon, and an armed truce exists between them and the deer. 'Ndhlovu, the elephant, comes crashing through the undergrowth and all make way for him, even Silwane, the lion. Far away in the bush a nightjar sounds his mournful note, or the childlike scream of the hyrax breaks the silence.

Symes reveled in such nights—he knew that they were part of that "lure of the veldt," the call of Africa. Tonight he seemed to be unable to take in enough of it, for ever and anon he stopped and held out his arms as if he would take it all to him, and oftentimes he would turn and look upon the village he was leaving behind him. Even that the moon had touched with her magic rays. The conical thatched huts each had its festoons of pearls. Ever and anon he could catch the faint sounds of singing—a wailing chant in a minor key.

It was the song of "Good Speed" sung at the death of a "great one" or to speed a parting guest of high degree. Symes was too far off to hear the words sung by the natives, but he knew them well:

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Lady, Queen of the Heavens,
Heed thy children; grant their prayer.

This one goes from us; he leaves us here.
Alone are we.
Our fires burn low; our hearts are sad.
Make his path smooth.

Heed thy children; grant their prayer.

Make smooth his path, for he is dear to our hearts.
He is dear to our hearts.

Inkoosikaas, Queen of the Heavens, heed our prayer,
'Tis all we ask of thee.

Once he started to sing the words and then, remembering that his people were thus bidding him farewell, his voice failed him. The word had come from headquarters at Bulawayo only that morning—a brief note to the effect that in view of his age he had been placed on the retired list, and as a reward for long and faithful service to the Crown he was to be given the honorary rank of chief commissioner with the pension that accompanies that rank.

He was conscious that he was growing old. Twenty years of faithful service saw him now a man of fifty. Not old, you say. But Africa is a greedy mistress and saps the life-blood of her devotees. Fever had always been with him; twice he had been at death's door with the dreaded blackwater fever. As he took stock of himself he realized that his time of active service had indeed passed. Old wounds, especially the one in the groin made by an assegai during the Matabele rebellion, were giving him increasing trouble, so that he walked slowly and painfully. Little remained to suggest the man of other days, the days when his native name expressed the physical man of him—'Ndhlovu, the elephant, the puller-up of trees.

In his prime Symes was a veritable giant of a man and even now he was no weakling, although a mere shadow of his former self. He had been the strong man of his year at college and an all-around athlete. His other native names still fitted him—names signifying "the friend," "he who sees in the dark." The names paint his portrait, relate the character of the man; his colossal strength, his kind but searching eyes, his vast understanding of and interest toward the people he was called upon to govern, his power to detect the true from the false, to pass swift and just sentence. His judgments and sayings had become bywords, and he was altogether loved and not a little feared by the people of Melefe, chief of the Matabele people.

Even before the letter of recall had reached him, Symes, knowing that his health was failing, had half-determined to ask for leave of absence—he never dreamed of resigning; that would be deserting his people—his children.

As he walked he lived once again the days that had gone by, dwelling on his triumphs and defeats impartially. Presently he came to the clearing of the man he had come to seek, and then, before proceeding any further, he gave the call of the "Go-away" bird, waited and repeated it thrice. Soon came an answering cry signifying that all was well, for it was the custom of these two men, Symes the white man and Zari the witch-doctor, to keep their meetings a thing apart from the knowledge of their people. Thus were they able to work in harmony, and, knowledge of events having been given by one to the other, they were better able to govern their people.

AS SYMES crossed the clearing, Zari came to meet him with his hand uplifted in welcome. Together they crossed to the hut and Symes sat on the stool that Zari had gotten for him. An old, old man was Zari, full of the wisdom of the ages; yet, seeing him thus, none would have said that this was Zari—Zari the most feared witch-doctor in all Rhodesia.

He stood for a while gazing at the silent Symes; then:

"Art silent. Methinks thou art greatly troubled. Speak! For words will oft carry away trouble as a stream carries away filth."

"Thou art right, old one. Nay—" he corrected himself—"I am old, ye are young. Yea, I am old and must therefore leave my people."

"What talk is this, that I am young and thou old? Of a truth I was an old man when thou wert but a suckling babe."

"But it is even so," said Symes wearily. "The white chief at Bulawayo says that I may no more serve this people and I must go to my own place."

"Yet this is folly. They do not mean this thing, and indeed, shouldst thou go, thou wilt return. Many years ago the great white chief bade thee leave us and sent another, that fool Johns, to dwell among us.

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Thou well knowest how short a while that one tarried among Melefe's people—gaining much wisdom—and yet thou didst return once again to be our father."

"This, Zari, this is different. No longer am I to serve under the white chief but am bidden to dwell among my own people. Therefore will I leave this country altogether, lest the burden of memories be too great for me, and I will go to Durban, even beside the ever restless Big Water. There will I wait until Inkoosikaas, the Great Mother, touches me with her arrow—Death."

"Then what is left for me?"

"*Au-a.* Dost thou who art named the Father of Wisdom ask me that? If thou diest who then is to take thy place?"

There was another long silence, which was once again broken by Zari.

"It comes to my mind, O Symes, that we twain will meet yet once again, and that day will be the day of my death and thine."

Until late in the night the two men sat and conversed, reviving old tales, living again their eventful past in memories. The moon waned and the bush around them became dark as if a thick blanket was spread over all, so dense was the darkness. The fire had sunk into fitful embers. Then, through the night, came the shrill trumpeting of 'Ndhlovu, announcing that the armed truce of the beasts of the bush was at an end, and hardly had the echo of his note died away before the harsh, hacking cough of a lion on the hunting-trail broke upon their ears.

A doe galloped madly past them, her head swinging feebly from side to side. Close to the fire she came but heeded it not nor the two men sitting there. Her eyes were wild and staring, seeing nothing, seeking only to escape the fate that followed, for close to her heels ran a pack of wild dogs—eyes glinting wickedly, tongues as if already reddened in the blood of a victim, lolling from wide-open, searching mouths.

Silently they ran, a personification of grim persistency. They were sure of their prey, and even as they passed the two men, one, the leader of the pack, leaped at the belly of the doe. His jaws snapped and then he fell to the ground, rolling over and over under the feet of the pack. No longer would the choicest titbits of the kill be his, but he must rest content with the leavings of others. For he, the leader of the pack, was leader no longer. He was old and had missed his kill.

"You see, Zari? It is the way of all things, man and beast, and I, even as the old dog, can no longer run with the pack."

"Sayest thou so? Well, thou art convinced of thyself but I am in no wise so convinced. Remember, when thou hast gone from us, the words of Zari. Thy race is not yet run. Once again thou wilt return, after many moons, and then comes the end."

Now the sky was beginning to pale; the Southern Cross had long since faded but in the east shone the herald that announces the new day—the morning star. Now all was still save for the sudden rush of some beast of prey, seeking its lair ere came the sun. All else was still as if the dwellers upon earth were consecrating themselves to a new day, seeking strength to meet their appointed fates.

Realizing that the time had come to part, the two men arose and for a moment faced each other. Hand gripped hand, kindly, heart-searching glances were exchanged. That was all save a mutual "*hamba gaghle*—may thy way be smooth," softly breathed as if in benediction. Then Symes turned and walked swiftly away toward his own quarters, which were outside the palisade that encircled Melefe's village. As he neared them, the sun shot up its first rays into the east, turning the sky into glorious banks of purples, fading into delicate violet, crimson and gold cunningly intermingled by the Master Hand.

A strong wind sprang up and as suddenly calmed—the final rite of purification. Then the lowing of cattle, the bleating of goats, the shrill yapping of native dogs told of the beginning of another day. Men, women and children came in ones and twos from their huts, huddled together for a few minutes before the still red embers of the night's fires, seeking to drive away the chills of the early morning; then, stretching, yawned and went off to perform their allotted tasks, the maidens to the water-hole while the women busily prepared the meal.

Some men rebuilt the fires while others went to release the cattle from their pens. The piccaninnies tumbled head over heels

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in their eagerness to get to the goat pen, where each, pouncing on a full-uddered ewe, greedily sucked at her dugs, breaking their fast with the rich, sweet milk.

Symes viewed the scene until, remembering that he had no longer a place among these people, he turned bitterly away and entered his hut.

Six days later Symes reported at headquarters at Bulawayo; then, bidding goodby to his friends—and when he saw how few of the old ones were left he realized more fully that his time had indeed passed—and all that connected him with the old life, he caught the first mail train to the south. Johns, the man who had once temporarily supplanted him as commissioner of his district, was one of the last to bid him good-by.

"God knows I am sorry to see you leave us, Symes. You have earned the rest, I know, but how we are going to fill your place is beyond me."

Johns was now attached to the headquarters staff, having profited greatly by the lesson Zari had taught him in bygone days.

And Symes, though longing to cry out that he neither needed nor desired a rest, thanked Johns and hastily sought the privacy of his compartment.

ON THAT same day that Symes bade farewell to Johns at Bulawayo, Acting Commissioner Wilson arrived to take charge of Symes' old district. It was Wilson's first appointment and had been given to him because it had, owing to Symes' careful administration, the reputation of being the best-behaved district in the country. Because it was his first appointment Wilson was anxious to make good, perhaps a little too anxious, considering his own welfare rather than that of the people he was called upon to govern.

A clean, upstanding fellow, full of grit and the desire to carry a thing through to its certain conclusion, he lacked the one essential thing that a man must have if he is ever to gain the confidence and respect of a native—especially the proud and haughty Matabele. Wilson was totally incapable of understanding the native's point of view, failing to perceive that they are all at heart but little children, yet, withal, having a certain dignity that is seldom, if ever, achieved by a white man.

He was unable to see, as Symes had always seen, that they had but a limited sense of right and wrong—right and wrong, that is, as defined by the government. The law of "mine" and "thine" they well knew and obeyed. But those others—the laws of the white man, the forbidding of certain customs, the levying of taxes, the right to hunt—in these laws they had to be patiently instructed, to be treated as delicately as a child who is required to partake of some particularly nasty medicine.

He was not harsh or overbearing in his dealings, as Johns had been—it was just that he did not understand. Then, too, he failed to realize the sacredness of their customs and, not understanding—he was young, you know—laughed long and loudly at them. His greatest fault was at the time of a rain-dance, a most sacred rite solemnly performed, for on its proper observance depended whether the spirits of rain would be kind to the people and send a good harvest. He laughed at them and essayed to join in the dance, burlesquing their every movement.

There could be no greater sacrilege. To put it in terms of the civilized world, a parallel example would be for a man to sing some ribald ballad in a mighty cathedral at the celebration of holy mass.

Mark you, he did not deal harshly with the people. He did not forbid the customs and so make himself hated as Johns had done—rather was he despised. But still the people obeyed him, being bidden so to do by Melefe, the chief, and Zari, the witch-doctor. The taxes were regularly paid, the laws observed and Wilson was happy, for he thought that he was making good. He even took his native name, Ibongola, the mule, in good humor.

But there came a time when his braying was heard at a wonder-working of Zari.

The child of Melefe, the chief, lay sick of a fever, and Zari was called upon to work a charm that the little one might live. Into the great compound of the chief came Zari, and there were all the old women assembled and all the old men; among the latter Wilson secreted himself. The sick child was laid on skins in the center of the enclosure, crying plaintively. As Zari entered the women began a mournful chant, a chant to mollify the great spirits

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and to beg them to listen to the words and prayers of Zari.

Zari was clad in his full regalia—the leopard skin, the necklace of life and death. He knelt down beside the child and laid his head on its little chest. The child hushed its crying and held out its hands to clutch at the gruesome necklace—the necklace of human teeth and snakes' fangs—the necklace of life and death.

"See," said the women, "the child will be cured—he clutches at life."

Calling one of his attendants, Zari gave the child a deep draft of a potion; then, rising to his feet, he held out his hands to the sky in invocation.

"Listen, O ye Spirits of the Great Great. An evil spirit hath entered this child so that he is like to die. Hear me then, O Inkoosikaas, and grant my petition. Give me, I pray ye, power to cast out the evil one that the child may live to come to ye later in your time."

Then, stooping over the child, which was now sleeping peacefully, Zari gently opened its mouth and appeared to take therefrom a small bone. This he held up so that all could see. Then, leaping into the air, he exclaimed exultantly—

"See, O ye people of Melefe, the great spirits have listened to the prayers of Zari, and lo, the evil spirit hath departed, and the child will live."

It was then that Wilson, whose quick eye had perceived that the bone which Zari pretended to take from the child's throat had all the time been concealed in the hands of the witch-doctor, broke the awed silence which followed the wonder-working with peals of laughter.

Zari turned to him, overcome with wrath.

"Thou art a fool, white man. Because ye perceive a little, thinkest thou that ye know all? Of a truth I tell thee that much is hidden from thee and ever will be. Who shall say what cured the child—for of a certainty he is now whole? Wilt thou in the greatness of thy knowledge deny the power of the spirits? Well art thou named Ibongola, the mule. Now go, for thy braying offends my ears."

And Wilson, seemingly compelled by a stronger will, left the place.

From that time on, a state of war existed between Zari and Wilson; a personal affair, for Zari, in his loyalty to Symes, calmed the people, who were incensed at Wilson's behavior. Many a conference to that end Zari had with Melefe, the chief, but Melefe was nominally the supreme power of the district, having authority over some two hundred square miles of territory, and his young fighting-men numbered fully five hundred.

Wilson, ever on the alert for some overt act on the part of Zari and finding none, finally, so greatly was he piqued, made his opportunity.

Part of the art of a witch-doctor is the power to foretell the future, to find lost and stolen property. This is sometimes done by "throwing the bones." To Zari then Wilson sent one of his messengers, saying that his favorite horse had strayed and begged that Zari would tell where it could be found. Zari took out his bones and murmured an incantation. Then, throwing the bones on the floor, he examined each one closely, noting carefully how each one fell and its relation to the others. When he spoke it was with the voice of a weary, disillusioned man.

"It is in my mind that Wilson sent thee to ask this of me hoping to trap me, for well he knows that the throwing of bones is forbidden. It was in my mind to refuse him this opportunity. Yet this I will not do. Mayhap he may yet be brought to confess that the great spirits are great indeed. Then listen! When thou left the place of thy master, the horse thou sayest has strayed was safely tethered, but even now it has broken from its picket, seduced thereto by the neighing of a mare. At the river fork, there wilt thou find the horse. Now go."

ON THE next day Zari, handcuffed to a tax-defaulter and in company with many other prisoners escorted by a strong armed guard, set out for Bulawayo.

Who shall tell of Zari's feelings during that six-day trip to the town? A bitterness and a deadly resentment against his unjust treatment were increasing day by day. Perhaps he, too, was growing old and failed to see things with his usual keen judgment. True it is that he failed to perceive that he was as unjust in judging all white men by the folly and weakness of Wilson as Wilson had been in committing him to prison.

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Gradually he forgot his promises to Symes and when the heavy iron-bound door of the prison clanged behind him he had firmly resolved to fight with all his might and influence against the white men as personified by Wilson.

Having been well instructed in the law by Symes, he had the ability as well as the right to appeal against Wilson's sentence, and had he done so the matter would most assuredly have come to the attention of Johns, who would have given him his freedom.

Now it so happened that one of Zari's cell-mates was a young man from Melefe's district, one Jonte by name. Jonte had always been treated with contempt by the others as one aping the customs and manners of the white men. Taken from his *kraal* when but a boy and sent to the mission school, he had there been taught how to read and write.

As is characteristic of the mission-educated native, upon going out into the world Jonte made illegal use of his knowledge. Seeking service with a white man, he had forged his master's signature and had obtained thereby a bottle of whisky. Later he was arrested, riotously drunk, and sentenced to three months imprisonment. His time was nearly up when Zari arrived and he poured out his troubles to the wise one—for, though he was greatly embittered toward the white men, he was surprized to find that Zari sympathized with him.

He was even more surprized when Zari called down the vengeance of the spirits of the Great Great on all white men and confided to Jonte that he sought to punish them by using all his influence on his return to make trouble for Wilson. He confessed he did not then see how, knowing the power of the white men.

Zari, as the days went by, became increasingly bitter. The confinement and the laborious tasks he was called upon to perform had the effect on his high spirit of stronger determination to punish the ones responsible for his abasement. One day, because he was slow at his task, the white warden struck him with a *sjambok*, and it seemed as if his frail body could not hold the wrath that blazed in his eyes.

On this day Jonte came to him.

"Dost thou indeed mean, O Zari, that thou wouldst urge Melefe's people to rebel against the white men if thou didst know the way?"

"Aye—even that."

"Then will I tell thee a way if thou wilt permit. Thou knowest that I can read the white man's papers—that much of the knowledge of the white men is mine. Thou scoffed at my knowledge in other days. Hear then what I have learned through this knowledge. The English are even now fighting with other white men—men of yet another white race. Many of the white police and their young men have gone across the Great Water to join in the fight, being called thereto by their chief, and should the people of Melefe now rise there is none to stop them."

"Art sure of this?"

"Yea, O Zari. See! Here it is written." And Jonte produced a local newspaper that the warden had thrown away. "See. Here one of the white dogs says that it is folly for the government to send the white police away; for, says he, 'If there should now be a rebellion we are lost.' "

"There he says true words."

Many conferences the two had after this, making plans and rehearsing speeches whereby Jonte would sow the first seeds of rebellion among the people so that the harvest could be reaped by Zari's later coming. The day before Jonte's release they met for a last conference, and in bidding him "good speed," Zari said:

"On the morrow's morn, O Jonte, thou leavest this place of many sorrows, and go as the tongue of Zari to Melefe's people. Speak only as I have instructed thee. Forget not to tell them how they treat me—Zari, the Lord of Life and Death. But see thou that thee nor thy words come to the attention of Wilson. Secretly must thou work."

Many days later Jonte, clad in a light blue suit of imitation American make, peg-top trousers creased the wrong way, orange-colored pumps—very pointed—these he wore around his neck until nearing a *kraal*—violet socks, pink shirt and flaming yellow tie, drenched with a cheap perfume, entered the outskirts of Melefe's country.

The first night he stayed at the village of a head man, one Gwamba by name. Now Gwamba was one of the old warriors of Lobenguella and had fought the white man during the rebellion of 1896. Because

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of his experiences during those bloody days Gwamba had an infinite respect for the powers of the white men and nothing but contempt for any of his people who endeavored to follow in the footsteps of the white people. Contempt, that is to say, for men who, like Jonte, having imbibed knowledge at a mission school and wearing the white man's clothes, think themselves equal to their teachers and far superior to their brethren.

It is not strange then that Jonte found a very unsympathetic audience in this, his first attempt to arouse discontent among the people. Yet they listened to him—heard him out to the end. For in addition to his enticement to rebellion—awaiting only the word from Melefe, the chief—Jonte brought them news of Zari.

When Jonte left the *kraal* Gwamba, the head man, refused to commit himself but gave his word that when Melefe called his council together he would attend and cast his spear as directed by Zari.

So from village to village went Jonte sowing the seeds of rebellion. Mostly was the seed well received, for the people were already murmuring because of Wilson's treatment of Zari and his dishonoring of their customs. Indeed, so great was the resentment toward Wilson that when Jonte spoke of the way in which Zari had been treated by the warden, Jonte had great trouble to prevent them from rising then and there.

"We have had enough," said they, "of this man called Ibongola—this scoffer. Let us take him now and give him to the women to torture."

But Jonte, by dint of clever counsel and threatening the wrath of Zari should they rebel ere word came from Zari, managed to quiet them.

IT WAS not long before word of Jonte's pilgrimage came to the ears of Melefe, the chief, who at once sent men to bring Jonte to him.

The chief's messengers found Jonte holding forth in one of the villages near by. Rudely they interrupted him with:

"Cease, babbler. Melefe—he who stamps with his foot and the hills tremble—would have speech with thee."

"Who art thou to so interrupt the mouthpiece of Zari, the witch-doctor?"

"Of that I do not know—but this I know full well. Melefe, the chief, bade me come for thee. Though of a truth," he added hastily, "if thou art indeed the Wise One's mouthpiece I crave pardon. The fault is not mine. I am the chief's dog and must do as he orders."

"That is enough," said Jonte, now somewhat mollified, "I will come with thee."

But though he followed Melefe's messengers jauntily enough his heart sank within him, for he knew not what reception the chief would accord him.

Two days he was kept in suspense and then he was brought into the presence of the chief. Giving him the royal salute, Jonte waited fearfully.

"Well, dog, what is this I hear of thee? Speak quickly and beware that ye speak only the words of truth, lest I pull thy tongue from thy mouth."

"*Inkosi*, lord," said the trembling Jonte, "I have only spoken as was commanded me by Zari."

"Once again I bid thee beware lest thou speak falsely. What was commanded of thee by the Great One?"

Melefe listened to Jonte's long story in silence until he spoke of making war upon the white people. Then:

"Fool, now know I that thou speakest falsely. Zari is all wise; would he then counsel this folly. What are we, I and my people? Are we gods? Nay, thou must reckon us greater than gods that thou dost speak of destroying the white men. Thou art but a fool. Hast lived in the mission and in the *kraal* by the water that sleeps not and yet dost not know of the power of the white men?

"Thou talkest like a child so young that the pap is not yet dry on thy face. Thou dost not know. I, even I, who fought with these white men when Lobenguella was a great shadow in the land, and fought until a greater shadow—even that of Rhodes the Peacemaker—ate it up, I know."

"Aye," replied Jonte. "Yet once again the sun of Lobenguella has risen."

"Ow! What folly is this? Hast seen the sun? The shadow I know is still here though I see it not. Yet do I feel it. And even should this sun arise whereof thou speakest, it will, perchance, as do all suns, cast other and greater shadows. Ow! Even I speak folly! Lobenguella, the Black One, is dead. Rhodes, he they called the Peacemaker, can never die. His spirit

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lives, and methinks all white men have somewhat of that spirit. I who was at the big fight at Thabas Indunna—the meeting-place of the chiefs—know that there is yet another spirit that is with these white men.

"It speaks with a loud voice so that all may hear and, hearing, bow down before it. Thus the spirit speaks: *pop, pop, pop, pop, pop.*"

Melefe meant the Maxim gun, which at the time of the big fight at Thabas Indunna was posted on a small hillock, since known as Maxim Hill, which commanded a clean sweep of the valley and did terrible execution among the ranks of the retreating natives.

Then Melefe summoned his guard and gave the death-command. "Take him away," and turned away his head as though not wishing to witness the assegai thrust that would end Jonte's life.

Jonte with a supreme effort broke away from his guard and flung himself at the feet of the chief.

"Mercy, O chief," he cried. "I have but done as Zari bade me. If thou wouldst slay me wait at least until Zari comes, that he may speak for me."

"Thy petition is granted." Then to the guard: "Take him away and guard him closely until Zari comes. Then if he has lied he shall be buried alive in the earth save only his head—that shall be left to the vultures."

Meantime Wilson became aware that things were not going well with his district. He scented an undercurrent of hatred and disloyalty. No outward break as yet, but when he approached a group of natives they separated quickly or ceased all conversation until he had departed out of earshot. His police boys could give him no information, for Melefe's people were equally careful to drop no hint of the coming storm.

WHEN Zari was released from prison he made his way by short stages directly to his hut. The confinement had told on him—had seemingly subdued his high spirit. Certainly his health had failed and he was racked with a dry, hard cough. Seven days and seven nights he remained in the seclusion of his hut. He was beset by doubts and fears, questioning always the wisdom of his course—the memory of his friend Symes ever reproaching him. When Melefe sent for him on his return, he refused to go, saying:

"Hearken to the words of Jonte my mouthpiece. When ye have heard him out, then will I come."

On the seventh day of his self-inflicted solitude Jonte brought him news of his success in rousing the people and also told him of some slighting remark that Wilson had made regarding Zari. It was then that Zari fully decided to commit himself to rebellion. In the beginning his ire had been leveled toward Wilson only, and in fomenting the spirit of unrest among the people his sole idea was to embarrass the commissioner. But now, all memories of Symes having for the moment faded before his anger at Wilson, he, seeing in a rebellion the best and surest way of finally eradicating Wilson, made his decision.

"Jonte, go ye with haste to Melefe, and say this to him. 'O Melefe, thus Zari, the Lord of Wisdom, bade me speak to thee. As thou knowest full well, I have been long angered at this Ibongola and have pondered on what way to deal with him, but now am I of a full mind in this matter. The time has come for thee and thy people to shake off the rule of the English. Thereto have the spirits advised me to tell thee to call together thy head men that an *indaba* may be held and all made ready against the time to strike.'"

It was after Jonte had delivered Zari's message that he, drunk with much beer and not a little boastful because of the importance of his position as the tongue of Zari, spoke of the things to come in the presence of one of Wilson's loyal police boys.

"Thou dog, fighting with thy brethren for the scraps that fall from thy master's hand. Soon wilt thou bark that thou mayest awaken thy master to the peril at hand. And he will awake to his death, and my spear will be red with his blood."

Swiftly the police boy took the news to Wilson and he, greatly alarmed at the news, sensed in the babbling of the drunken Jonte the explanation of the attitude of the natives toward him. Seeing that there was no time to waste, he at once sent an express messenger to the nearest telegraph post, some ninety miles away, with a message to be relayed to headquarters. On that same day he sent Jonte under arrest as a tax-defaulter to Bulawayo. Jonte's

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arrest was the cause of much merriment in the village of Melefe, for he had, by his overbearing and boastful ways, made himself greatly disliked. None suspected the real cause of his arrest.

When Johns, the assistant chief commissioner, received Wilson's call for help he at once consulted with the head of the department.

"As you say, Johns, the situation is serious, but what can we do? You know as well as I that we have no troops at our disposal."

"Yes, I know that, sir, but on the other hand if we do nothing to prevent this threatened outbreak the chances are that the natives throughout South Africa will rise."

"I admit, Johns, it's serious, —— serious."

"I have a plan. Let us send for Symes. You know what an influence he has over Melefe, and besides he is a friend to Zari."

"All right, Johns, do that. It's a forlorn hope, but it may work. Is there time enough?"

"Plenty, sir. You know they never strike before the new moon."

The response to Johns' urgent telegram asking Symes to return once more to appease his people came five days later. It was a small bundle addressed to Johns, which, when opened, Johns found to contain two twigs bound closely together in a peculiar fashion. Also there was a sheet of notepaper covered with Symes' fine handwriting. The note read:

DEAR JOHNS:

I am sorry that I can't come in person so I am sending the next best thing I know. I am afraid that my days are numbered as I have my third attack of black-water fever and I can hardly expect to pull through. Well, I will be content if this affair comes off all right. But enough of myself. I suggest that you, Johns, go alone to Melefe's *kraal*, contriving if possible to arrive there the night of the big *indaba*—the night before the new moon—and send for Zari. He will come if you send the bound twigs.

They are a symbol, as you know, of our friendship for each other. Say to him that, remembering his prophecy that we should see each other before I die, I have sent him these twigs, denoting that I am with him in the spirit. From then on it will be up to you, working on his friendship for me as much as possible. If he should in any way hesitate, remind him of how he told me that he would die before me. Say that my path to the Land of the Spirits will be a sorrowful one if my people break faith with the English——

The note ended abruptly, as if the writer's strength had failed him.

It was the night of the new moon when Johns came to Wilson's quarters at the outskirts of Melefe's village. His progress through the district he had contrived to make unnoticed, making wide detours 'round the *kraals*, traveling mainly at night, always avoiding the main trail. Down at the council-place he could hear the singing and wild beating of the war-drums that betokened the assembling of the head men for a big war *indaba*.

Wilson, who was anxiously waiting for help to arrive, welcomed him gladly and then, with a note of alarm in his voice:

"But surely, sir, you have not come alone. Don't you realize this is serious?"

"I know, boy, but we have got to play a lone hand. There are no troops available. They are all busy up in German territory. Now there is not any time to waste and I must have a word with Zari. Have you a police boy you can trust?"

"Yes."

"Good. Send him here to me."

Radicladi, the native who had brought news to Johns of the impending uprising, quickly appeared in answer to the summons. To him Johns gave the bound twigs Symes had sent to him.

"Go quickly, give these to Zari and bid him follow thee. There is need of great haste."

AT THE council-place excitement ran high. Much beer had been prepared by the women against this occasion, and the men had already partaken copiously of the heavy, heady fluid. Orator after orator had harangued them, whipping them into a frenzy of rage against the white men, urging them to take up arms against their oppressors and be once more a nation paying tribute to none. As each speaker concluded, the war-drums were beaten with increased vigor, the chanting became wilder and faster, the dancing more brutal, more beastly. It seemed that the men would break from restraint ere the time was ripe, and that blood would be shed ere night fell.

Melefe, seated on his stool of state, holding in his hand the miniature stabbing spear, the throwing of which was a formal declaration of war, watched with Zari the

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rising passions of his people. Finally all of the men ceased for the moment their drinking and singing and, with one concerted rush, assegais held above their heads, came fast to the place where Zari and Melefe were seated. A spear's length away they halted, paused a moment, then beat their shields with the blunt end of their spears, making a loud throbbing note which gradually increased into a sullen roar. Suddenly it stopped.

There was a moment's heavy silence fraught with strange feeling. As from one throat came the cry of "*Bayete!*"—the royal salute, *Bayete*—thrice repeated. The cry was echoed by the warriors outside the council-place, taken up and tossed to and fro in an ever-widening circle till it seemed as though the whole earth was filled with the cry, "*Bayete!*" Then it died away as suddenly as the gust of wind that presages a storm, and all waited expectantly for word from Zari.

And Zari, the witch-doctor, Lord of Life and Death, seeing that the time had come, addressed the people. He was clad in his full regalia—the leopard skin proclaiming his power over all animals, the necklace of snake fangs and human teeth telling of his power over life and death. Around his knees hung small phials containing wondrous herbs.

"Ye men of Melefe, pay heed to my words, for they are fraught with much that may mean good or evil to thee, as the spirits decide. Ye know how Wilson falsely had me put away, though that in itself is as a thing of no moment, and how he hath poured contempt upon our customs so that ye have long murmured against his dealings. Jonte, my messenger to ye, even he whom this same Wilson sent away to the great white *kraal*, falsely swearing that he had not payed his tax, even he told ye of the big fight that the English are now making with men of another and more powerful white race.

"The English are hard-pressed and have not the wherewithal to deal with us should we rise. But what folly is this I speak? Ye will not rise; blood runs not in your veins. Ye prefer to be the dogs of the white people and desire not to be once again a great nation." Then, noting the angry murmur that came from the head men, he went on. "Pardon me, O ye people of Melefe, for I see that I wrong thee——"

It was at this moment that Radicladi, who had wormed his way unperceived through the councilors, thrust the bound twigs that Johns had given him into Zari's hands.

It is well that at this moment the women brought in further supply of beer with which the thirsty councilors proceeded to refresh themselves, or they must have seen the start that Zari made when he saw what it was that Radicladi had given him. It seemed for a moment as if he would collapse, but he quickly rallied and whispered—

"Tell me, whence got ye these?"

"A white man gave them to me, O Wise One, and bade me tell thee to come to him."

"Ye mean that fool, Ibongola, thy master?"

"Nay, O Zari. It was one greater than he, before whose wisdom Ibongola is even as a little child."

"Go! Tell him that I come."

Zari called for silence.

"O Melefe, and ye head men of Melefe, are ye indeed sure of yourselves when ye ask for war against the white men?"

"Aye, Zari, we are sure."

"Then go I to make a mighty medicine that the great spirits be with us when Melefe, the bull, casts the spear. See ye that none follow, lest evil befall."

Straightway Zari went to the commissioner's hut. As he entered he looked eagerly around for Symes. Seeing only Johns and Wilson, he started back as if fearing a trap.

Johns advanced toward him, hand uplifted in salutation.

"Greeting, O Zari, Lord of Wisdom, friend of my friend."

"Greetings," responded Zari dryly. "It comes to me, O Johns, that thou hast learned much since last we twain met. But what now? Who art thou that thou sendest to me the bound twigs? Thou art not Symes, my friend. What wouldst thou with Zari?"

"Zari, Symes thy friend is sick to the point of death. When we sent word to him that his people, led by Zari, were on the point of making war on the English he was greatly angered, and sorrowed deeply because that his friend had been false to his friendship. He sent to me the bound twigs and bade me come to thee, to remind thee of thy promises to guide

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this people in the right way. Why hast thou done this thing?"

"That thou shouldst ask of Wilson, he whom the people of Melefe call Ibongola."

"I know of his dealing with thee, O Zari. He hath grievously erred. But what then? He is young. Say now, didst thou do anything to enlighten him? Nay, thou didst stand by and allowed him to make a fool of himself. That was not the act of a friend of Symes, but perchance Symes is nothing to thee?"

"In some part, O Johns, thou art right. I am an old man, and when Symes went from me my life became empty and I bitter; but think not, I bid thee, that I have forgotten Symes, or that he is nothing to me. Only let him come and all will be well."

"That is a thing that can not be, O Zari. This, Symes bade me tell thee. He bade me remind thee of how thou didst say that once again would ye twain meet and that day would be the day of thy death and his. He can not be with thee in the flesh, but of a truth he is here in the spirit. Now hark ye, these are the words of Symes:

" 'O Zari, what is this I hear of thee? Hast thou indeed forgotten me? That is not the part of a true friend. Soon I go to the land of the Great Great to give an account of my wanderings, and of a truth my path will be a sorrowful one if thou allow this evil thing to be. Always shall I sorrow for my friend who was no true friend. And my people—what shall be said of my people? Their name will be forever a byword among the people of the earth when it shall be told they arose and stabbed their friends in the back. And for thee—didst thou not say that thou wouldst go before me to the Land of the Great Spirits? Wilt thou in truth be received there if ye do this wickedness? Bid my people all to deal gently with those that come after me, for they have all somewhat of my spirit. Now farewell, I grow weak. Remember, my spirit watches thee.' "

As Johns gave Zari the message the witch-doctor's resentment toward Wilson gradually vanished. He realized that he had not dealt altogether justly with Wilson, and with this realization, came the determination to leave no stone unturned to be once more worthy of Symes' friendship.

"Wilson, thou hast made many mistakes in pouring ridicule on the customs of us black people. But I, too, have erred and that grievously for I am old and know thy ways. I could have taught thee much, but rather chose I to remain silent or mocked at thy doings, comparing thee to Symes. And so it happened that in the greatness of my regard for Symes and my longing for him, I came to hate all other white men.

"But now see I the right way and, by the oath that I swore at the binding of the twigs, will I make all right betwixt thee and the people ere I depart from this life. And thou," Zari continued, turning to Johns, "mark well what I do this day. Now come with me and fear not, for thou wilt be under the protection of the great spirits."

The two white men followed Zari to the council-place. On the way he stopped at the hut that he had made his headquarters while staying at the village and, entering, brought therefrom a large wicker basket containing a *momba*—a snake whose bite is fatal in ten minutes.

AS THEY entered the council-place they were greeted with loud shouts—shouts of joy for Zari and shouts of rage and hate for Johns and Wilson. Especially was Johns the cause of great anger, for when he had been in charge of the district he had dealt harshly with the people. Some there were who would have slain the two white men then and there, but Zari interposed, saying:

"Fools, the time is not yet ripe. Would ye go against the wishes of the great spirits?"

Then, taking his stand to the right of Melefe, he motioned the two white men to stand on the chief's left. Shedding all his raiment until he stood naked save for a small breech-cloth, he held up his hand in invocation to the great spirits. As he did so a deep silence spread over all. Zari began to speak abruptly:

"Ye people, this is a grave matter. The spirits have not yet given me their counsel. Perchance I am unworthy to receive their word or, being old, have not heard their voices. This has been promised me. In this—" he indicated the basket containing the *momba*—"is a snake, and in the snake is one of the spirits of the Great Great. Thus shall we know the right way.

"Soon one of you, when I give the word, will release the snake, and, should he bite

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the white men, then will ye know that the spirits of the Great Great are angry at them and all white men, and desire that they should be wiped off the face of the earth. But, and mark this well, should the spirit strike me, then will ye know that it is to be peace between you and the white men, and ye must obey all that are sent here in authority over ye. Now, my children, will ye promise to abide by the decision of the spirit?"

Now there were many who did not see eye to eye with Zari, young men who were not a little scornful of the pretenses of the old witch-doctor. These Zari spoke to angrily:

"What, fools, would ye set thyselves against the way of the spirits? Take heed lest ye are seized with the deep sleep from which there is no wakening."

Away in the distance came a low roll of thunder.

"Listen, fools, the Great Spirits are angry. Wilt delay further, or wouldst wait until the vengeance falls?"

"Nay, O Zari, we are of one mind," said the chief hastily. "If there are any who would otherwise, they shall reckon with me. I have spoken."

"That is good. See then that ye keep faith."

Carefully Zari carried the basket containing the snake to the open space in front of the chief's place, knelt down for a few moments and bowed his head as if in deep thought. Then, hidden by the basket, he smeared his feet, legs and thighs with an evil-smelling ointment, the scent of which arouses a snake to anger and which he will follow over a long and difficult trail. Rising, Zari walked slowly back and took up his position on the right of Melefe and once more spoke.

"All is now ready. Let the spirit decide—and do thou who art named Gwamba take the lid off the basket, taking care that the basket is between thee and me. Do this and fear not."

Gwamba slowly did as he was told, and the snake at once emerged. Fully ten feet long, its black skin glistened in the lights of the fire. For a while it moved not, save only that the half of its body, held erect, swayed gently back and forth.

"See," the whisper went up, "the spirit is making its choice."

Suddenly, like a flash of lightning, the snake darted for Zari and struck him in the groin, struck again and darted through an opening in the fence that encircled the council-place and was lost in the bush.

A gasp of astonishment went up, astonishment and sorrow. Then the men rushed with spears upraised to put an end to Johns and Wilson, but Zari, swaying in his tracks, put himself between the white men and the oncoming angry mob.

"Fools," he cried, "is this the way ye keep the promise ye made me? Beware the vengeance of the spirits to whose abode I soon must go."

Even as he spoke he collapsed in a heap on the ground. To him ran Johns, Wilson and Melefe, the chief. To the last Zari said—

"Melefe, thou wilt see that they keep the promise?"

"Aye, Zari, I will see to it."

"What sayest thou, O Johns? Thinkest thou that Symes will be appeased?"

"Yea, Zari, thou hast been a true friend."

"Then thank I the great spirits and Inkoosikaas, the Queen of the Heavens, that this way out has been shown to me. I go, Symes, I go even as I told thee, to prepare thy path for thee. Soon we shall meet again—in the land of the spirits."

And Zari was no more.

Johns laid him gently down, then, rising to his feet, asked that he might speak to the people.

"Zari, friend of my friend, is dead. The manner of his death ye know; also ye know the words he spake. Now will ye, remembering the choice that was made by the spirit within the snake, keep the promise that ye made, that ye would abide by that choice? Or will ye dishonor Zari, the witch-doctor, the Father of Wisdom, Lord of Life and Death? Further, if ye renounce the promise, then do ye dishonor Symes, even Incubu who was ever your friend. If it is my blood or the blood of this one, whom ye call Ibongola, that ye thirst for, take it, but forget not the promise that ye made."

"Nay, O Johns, we desire not thy blood, nor indeed the blood of any white man. We have given our word. That is sufficient."

When Johns returned to headquarters, after seeing Wilson firmly installed once more and the danger passed, he found a telegram announcing the death of Symes.

The day of his death was that upon which Zari had journeyed to the land of the Great Great.

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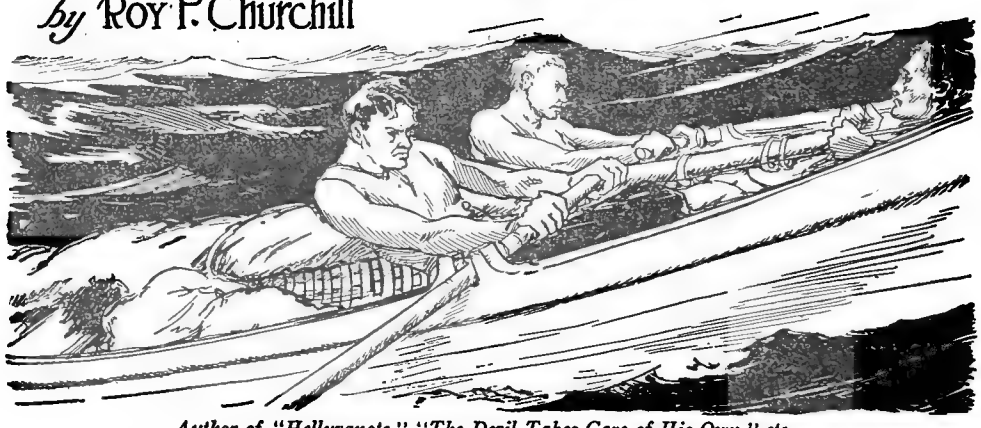
INSIDE AND OUTSIDE

by Roy P. Churchill



Author of "Helluvanote," "The Devil Takes Care of His Own," etc.

PETE McSHANE did not like the way his ship was celebrating Christmas. Left to him, the canteen money would have gone for an extra feed, theater tickets for the ship's company, or left intact to be bet on a boat race. Instead of that, the Navy collier *Pollox* was entertaining twenty-five of the city's poorest children with gifts of shoes and clothing and a dinner, the size of which few but a Navy cook would dare attempt. From where Pete sat on the edge of Number three hatch he could hear the unrestrained squeals of joy from the children and the deeper-toned laughter from his shipmates.

"Ed Radley's doings," he grumbled resentfully as he moved the newspaper he had spread on the hatch tarpaulin to protect his trousers into a sunnier spot. "Kids underfoot until there's no place a man can call his own."

McShane filled his pipe and sat down again, poking his fingers into one pocket after another for a match.

"I got a match, mister," said a piping voice behind him, and over McShane's shoulder came a claw-like hand from which the outside layer of dirt, if not the ingrained stain, had been washed, thrusting half a match in front of his face.

"Swiped it," accused McShane, turning to face the boy, whose rat-like, fear-haunted eyes were about on a level with his own.

"Found it, mister."

McShane took the match and lighted his pipe.

The boy stood by warily. After the first advance to offer the match he had withdrawn out of arms' length.

"Didn't you get no dinner?" asked the boy, seeking a clew to the other's lack of friendliness.

"No," said McShane sullenly. "Too many kids around here."

The boy stepped back a pace farther, looked about him swiftly and pulled a sugar-coated cake from a pocket.

"Here," he said, advancing again. "I had plenty. You eat it. I was saving it till tomorrow."

McShane took the cake, turned it over and with a snort of disgust tossed it from him over the ship's side. The boy saw it circle in the air and the swoop of a hovering gull as it touched the water; then he slipped by McShane as close to the rail as he could get, wordless in the loss of his treasure, but age-old understanding of the other's wanton cruelty in his quick, furtive movements and his bright, accusing eyes.

"Blimp" Taylor, at the door of the galley, saw the whole thing. He followed the boy forward, stuffed a couple more cakes into his hands from the store he had put aside from the best batch and went back to his cooking.

"I'd like to make the big heathen miss his own chow a while," he muttered, but made no protest to McShane, who was a law unto himself.

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THE *Pollox* was almost to the rendezvous of the sub-chasers when she lost her wireless set in a quick tropic storm. The same lightning flash which put it out of commission ran down the mainmast and smashed the barrels of oil for the fleet's launches which were secured around it. There was gasoline in the lot, too, which caught fire from the burning wood of one of the barrels, mixed with the oil and, not exploding because unconfined, ran in a burning wave over the steel deck. Part of it set fire to two life-boats abreast the hatch and burned their bottoms out and a good quantity leaked through the loosened plates at the mast's heel and trickled down to the hot, dry coal against the engine-room bulkhead.

The crew fought the fire with steam and with chemicals, with water and with pure nerve, but the flames had the best of it from the beginning. Smothered gases in the dusty coal, mixed with the fumes of the gasoline, collected and blew out a bulkhead, letting burning coal soaked with oil tumble into the fire-room. Smoke and gas which was almost flame drove the crew out without time to haul fires.

"Boats," decided the captain, knowing how precious few minutes there were left before the untended boilers would blow the bottom out of his deep-laden ship.

Six men tumbled into the dingey. Spud Collins, Buck Henshaw and Blimp Taylor were more badly burned than they had realized in the excitement of the losing struggle. Ben Sodill, making a vain effort to haul his fire, and the last up the ladder, fainted as he tried to get out an oar. His scant clothing hung in charred wisps about his blistered body. Edwin Radley and Pete McShane had fared better. Their eyebrows were singed and their faces and the backs of their hands were smoke blackened and scorched, but with more clothing to protect them they had escaped the severe burns received by the men of the fire-room and galley.

Radley took charge and the small sail was set. Being an observing quartermaster, he knew, without looking, the deviation of the compass for the small boats, marked on a card inside the case. Other boats were in the water, their flickering lanterns bobbing on an easy swell. He steered for the nearest of them until in hailing distance. It was the captain's boat, standing by to see the last of the *Pollox*.

"The dingey and six men, sir," Radley reported and gave the names.

"Is your water-breaker full?"

"Yes, sir," answered Radley.

Here he did wrongly, for he took this for granted without making sure. There had been some hurry and confusion at the last moment as men were reassigned from the boats which had been ruined. The dingey was not a regular life-boat, and the breaker had been tapped the day before by an apprentice to scrub clothes out of hours. He had meant to refill it at the next issue of fresh water, but forgot it. The breaker was really less than half full and in the rush of launching no extra was provided.

"Then get out of this while the wind is fair," ordered the captain. "That cockleshell wouldn't stand another squall. Steer S.S. W. Allow half a point westerly variation. You should sight land before dark tomorrow night. Culebra Island is only a hundred miles."

After a time Ben Sodill, stretched at full length in the boat, head and shoulders in the stern sheets and legs under the after thwart, roused and asked for water. None of the other boats were in sight. Blimp Taylor, who sat beside Radley, took the tiller and, unhooking the small tin cup which hung on a short chain under the thwart, the quartermaster tipped the breaker and poured out half a cupful.

"We will have to go easy on it," he cautioned as the fireman drained the cup. "All day tomorrow is ahead of us, and it's not full. We may run in to some of the other boats and get more and we may not."

The words silenced Collins, Henshaw and Taylor, each craving the feel of cool water on their parched lips and throats.

An hour later Sodill asked again and Radley doled out half a cupful to each of the burned men. McShane was asleep in the bow of the boat and Radley took no water himself. After the water the others dozed off fitfully, and at twelve o'clock Radley woke McShane to come aft and relieve him at the tiller and sheet. The shifting woke Sodill and he renewed his plea for water.

"Hold off a little while," said Radley. "It will be worse tomorrow, Ben."

"It couldn't be," said the sufferer. "Give it to me now. I'm afire inside."

To sooth him Radley poured out a bare swallow.

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"Hold it in your mouth," he said. "Let it trickle down. That's all you can have until daylight."

"How much water have you given these fellows," asked Pete McShane as the fireman lay back quietly, the comfort of the few drops of water soothing for the moment the pain of his burns.

"The four of them have had a cup apiece," said Radley. "I've given Ben a little more than that."

"You didn't take any yourself?"

"No, I can hold out a while longer."

"You're foolish," said McShane. "I'll take what's coming to me now before I go on watch. You ought to do it, too, Radley. There's just so much water and each man is due his equal share."

"The other four are burned," argued Radley, hot with anger at the other's selfishness, yet realizing the cold justice of it. "I can do this at least," he said: "give my share to the others to keep you from having it."

"That'll be your affair," said McShane, "and don't think I'm trying to put anything over. You are in charge. I want what's coming to me but I play square. I could take all the water away from the lot of you, if I wanted to."

Radley knew that this was so. McShane's giant frame was as hard as steel. With the other four suffering with burns and himself a small man in comparison, McShane was more than a match for all of them even had they been able to attack him from all sides, which was impossible in a small boat.

Just after daylight the five who were able ate hard bread from the sealed tin boat-box. Radley refused the water, giving his full share to Sodill, using a few precious drops to loosen a half-burned portion of cloth from the fireman's leg. Sodill could eat nothing, but eyed the breaker constantly, talked of water, begged for it. Pete McShane drained his cup with the others and took the amidship thwart, getting out an oar. The wind was fast dying out.

Hanson and Collins tried to make themselves comfortable in the shade of the sail. Blimp Taylor, one shirt-sleeve and shoulder stuck tight to a swollen arm, took the tiller with the other, and Radley sat down to the opposite oar from McShane. They began to row.

The wind failed utterly and the two unstepped the mast and laid it out along the thwart between them. None spoke to McShane, but in every move he made four pairs of eyes followed him in hatred. They had seen him drink the water which would cool their dry throats and make easier their suffering. They looked at him as if all their pain was his fault.

Radley, beginning to feel his thirst keenly, was full of cold contempt and loathing. Through it all Pete McShane moved with deliberate, sullen arrogance, not indifferent to his companions' attitude, but made the more stubborn by it.

HOUR after hour Radley and McShane rowed on. The sun glared at them with withering heat. Both were stripped to their light, sleeveless undershirts. At regular intervals Radley gave the command "Oars" and doled out a swallow of water to the burned men and to McShane. At noon he took a few drops himself and they ate more hard-tack and rested. The other four were past eating.

Blimp Taylor sat huddled in the stern with the compass between his legs, his head hanging forward and his jumper dampened in sea water over his burned arm. Sodill babbled in his delirium of Sunday ice-cream that black imps continually snatched from his dry lips. He and Collins and Henshaw lay under the spread-out sail which Radley and McShane kept damp with sea water.

The first hour past noon Radley fell forward on his face, inert, helpless, past pulling another stroke. McShane had never questioned the leadership, but he swore bitterly now crawled aft and poured a half cup of water from the almost empty breaker. This he forced between Radley's lips, holding his neckerchief so that it soaked up the few spilled drops. Then he took Radley by the shoulders and tumbled him over the side, holding him in the water until he revived. The wet neckerchief went between Sodill's clenched teeth.

"I can go on," said Radley.

McShane pulled him back into the boat and they took up the rowing.

"I'll handle what's left of the water from now," announced McShane.

Sodill had a moment of consciousness when they rested again.

"Shoot me," he begged. "I'll go anyhow. Give me another swallow of water and then shoot me. There's a gun in the boat-box. Do it, Pete!"

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McShane looked at him for a long moment. This was his first time to serve out the water. He shook the breaker, felt its weight thoughtfully, then poured out the last of it, a brimming cup. He cut a neckerchief into four wads, soaked them, put one between the lips of Sodill, Henshaw and Collins and gave Blimp Taylor his. The cup was less than half full when he finished.

Radley made no move to hinder but sat helplessly slumped on the thwart, watching. McShane brought the cup back, holding it carefully. Except for a redness in his eyes he seemed as strong as ever.

Radley shook his head, pointed to the others mouthing their wet silk feverishly.

"Half and half," said McShane grimly and lifted the cup to his lips. Radley tried to get up, to match his strength of body against the other's. McShane pushed him back and held him with one hand while he drank slowly, measured carefully.

"Drink!" he commanded presently, offering the cup. "What's left is yours."

"No!" said Radley, squirming with desire, but conquering.

"Drink!" repeated McShane.

Radley was filled with blind rage. He resisted. McShane held him, forced the water down his throat.

"Fool!" he muttered. "You wasted some."

The two then rowed on through the endless afternoon. When Radley faltered McShane held him over the side until he could go on. The sea was glassy, shimmering, sending up the reflected heat in hot, thirsty waves.

At nightfall, with land looming in a distant peak, a faint breeze came. Unaided, McShane hoisted the sail. Radley had failed for good an hour before and Taylor had rolled from his place at the tiller.

Standing, sculling slowly with one oar from the stern, McShane kept the boat moving. He tottered a good deal and leaned on the long oar for support. When the breeze stiffened he sat down again, gained some strength from the coolness and at last guided the small craft into a tiny cove.

Radley awoke to painful consciousness at McShane's rude shake. He remembered dimly carrying heavy, inert bodies from the boat to the beach and with the last one collapsing weakly beside them, cursing as he did so at the noise of the loose stones which marked McShane's going. He knew as well as McShane that there was a coconut grove half a mile down the beach but no natural springs of water on Culebra Island. The *Pollox* had spent a month there the year before.

"Gone to save himself," he said thickly over his swollen tongue and got as far as his knees to follow before he pitched forward and lay still again.

McSHANE had not gone to the coconut grove. A narrow trail led up the side of the mountain and down the other to the shore station. McShane took this path, walking at first and then climbing and crawling. Thorny vines tore his flesh and jagged rocks bruised his knees when he missed his footing in the darkness. But he kept on up, made the summit and started down. Going down was even harder. Twice he slipped and saved himself by catching at small trees and bushes. Then, with the lights of the station in sight, he missed a step, clutched wildly for friendly growth to stop his fall, found nothing and fell abruptly over a ledge of rock.

He tried to shout then, for the lights were not far away, but a hoarse croak was the only sound his dry throat would make. His right leg had twisted as he fell and his weight snapped the bone below the knee.

He tried standing on it, tried chewing leaves to help his voice, and, both failing, doubled the broken limb back against his thigh, strapping it there with his belt, and dug raw fingers into rock crevices until he was back on the trail. Then, on hands and knees, sliding and rolling, hands cut by the rocks, the knees of his trousers worn through to the flesh, he came at last in sound of a sentry at the outskirts of the station.

The sentry came near firing when the dim shape ignored his challenge, but took a chance with a flash-light from the shelter of a tree. What he saw in the beam of it made him whistle in horror for the corporal of the guard.

McShane knew exactly where to tell the rescue party to go after they had forced water between his cut lips.

"IT'S A good thing you kept rowing, and a good thing one of you had strength enough to come for help," said the doctor to Radley. "There

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would have been little hope for at least three if the burns had waited much longer for dressing. We'll save the cook's arm. By morning we would have cut it off and had done with it."

"What about McShane?"

"Bad off," said the doctor. "He and Sodill will have a hard fight. He crawled a quarter of a mile after his leg was broken and got to us as near dead as any man I have ever seen. Exhaustion may bring on pneumonia."

They were standing in the little closely-screened hospital of the station. Electric-fans droned against the heat and a white-clad hospital apprentice answered Ben Sodill's summons with a glass in which ice tinkled against the side.

Radley started out, caught a low murmur of words from McShane and leaned over to listen.

"He keeps on like that," said the doctor. "Something about Christmas and children and cake with icing on it. Men go off that way often. It means nothing—probably never happened to him."

Radley knew better. Blimp Taylor's story of the child and the cake had made the round of the ship and put Pete McShane down to the last notch of his shipmates' regard, but somehow the heedless brutality had backlashed into the man's own heart and started a change.

The dingey was the only boat in. Tugs from the station, searching for others, found the *Pollox* still afloat, her crew winning the fight against the fire with hand-pumps.

After the boilers went and she still did not sink, the captain ventured aboard, summoning the larger, more sea-worthy boats standing by for orders. With fresh men and a tow, they brought the ship finally to a safe anchorage.

"Outside of her not changed much," said McShane, able to sit up and look out over the bay.

"You can't always tell from the outside," answered Radley.

THE POLITICIAN

by RALPH M. THOMSON

IN A corner of his work-shop,
Just across the river Styx,
Where, according to tradition,
Sinners are ordained to mix,
Sat the devil in a study,
Contemplating what to do,
For he had been rather idle
And he was a trifle blue.

He was feeling out of kilter
And discouraged at his fate,
For the world seemed growing better
And more heavenly of late;
And regardless of his efforts
And his skill in shaping sin,
Few were pausing on their journey
At his door, and dropping in.

Few were asking his assistance,
Few were envying his art,
And because, perhaps, despondent
And perturbed of mind and heart,
He resolved, in desperation,
To immortalize his worth,
So he made a politician
And he sent him up to earth.

Sent him up among the people
To indulge in blatant lies,
To deceive, corrupt and slander
And be damned in decent eyes;
And so well has he succeeded
On the mission of his prince,
That the devil in his work-shop
Has been busy ever since.

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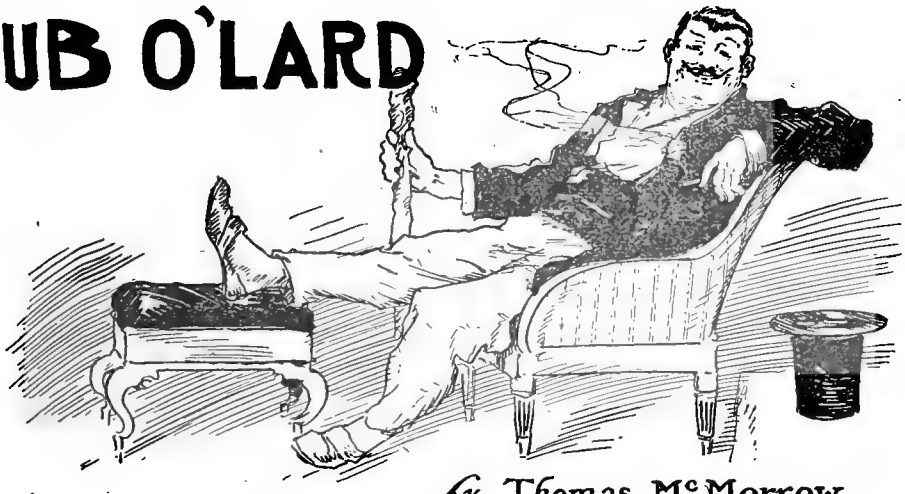
TUB O'LARD



by Thomas McMorrow

Author of "Murderer's Cross," "Cigars, Cigarets, Chocolates and Bonbons," etc.

I WAS visiting my friend Renard in that barred and shuttered house on the Place de Ville upon whose lintel is written *Gendarmerie Nationale.* Renard is the local commissioner of police.

We argued. We always argue. My friend is so hopelessly European.

"In America," I said, "there is nothing irrevocable about being a robber. We give a man a chance to begin again. I could tell you of a highwayman who became the governor of his State—a leading citizen—a favorite son!"

My friend Renard inhaled his smoke, pondered and shook his head.

"*C'est drôle.* I can not conceive of it. Here in France one knows what to think of people. If there is blood upon the road we do not cry '*Voilà*, our future mayor has walked abroad this morning!' *Mais non!* We are assured that an evil fellow has set his feet upon the way to the gallows. It is then our purpose to see that he does not stray from that straight and narrow path. Men are what they are, *m'sieu.*"

He is a true policeman, Renard. He wears a cloak and a pointed hat when he walks in the street. The fall of his cloak is broken by the butt of a pistol. He does not glance at the townsfolk. He watches them. He scrutinizes them. His dark eyes shine upon them as he glides by, and little children clutch their mothers' skirts and whimper.

"But—" I began again.

He gestured in the air abruptly.

"Have you heard of 'Tub o' Lard?' he asked.

"The name is familiar. Was he not a famous comedian?"

"He had his comic interludes," said my friend Renard. "But he was not exclusively a comedian. He was in fine as murderous a scoundrel as our France was ever blessed with. His complete *dossier* is interesting but too voluminous; permit me now to cull one episode which illustrates the principle for which I contend."

"There are degenerates, of course," I objected.

"Yes!" he smiled. "There are men who are consistently criminal."

I shook my head, unsatisfied.

"We will begin then with M. Tacusier, a very charming fellow who lived in that pretty house I pointed out to you today as we came into Fleury by the Chichee road," he opened, in the manner of a professor. "You remember that house of red and black bricks, jointed with white mortar and mansard-roofed with lapping gray slates? You remarked the fine grove of beech trees about it. You can just catch the glitter of its diamond-paned windows from the *Place* outside here."

"That one with the tall stuccoed wall about it, hooded with red tiles," I confirmed.

"You did not see the garden the wall encompasses," he went on. "M. Tacusier

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was a lover of flowers, and marvelous hydrangeas grew there and marguerites and roses each in their bed, tucked in by morsels of water-worn volcanic stone and cut by little paths, all leading to a tiny, vine-covered Summer-house. On the rear of this abode opens the river, falling with musical crash over the miller's green-grown wheel turning slowly round."

"But you are a poet, *mon ami!*" I exclaimed admiringly.

"The 364th Infantry wintered in Fleury this year," he continued after a warning silence. "Captain Cahusac was of that regiment and he was a frequent visitor at this charming dwelling. He was the personnel officer, and his work took him often to the outlying villages where companies of the regiment were billeted. He rarely passed the house without pushing open the red door set in the stuccoed wall. You know the famous white wines of Fleury, *monsieur?* M. Tacusier had the finest. He was not a proprietor. He owned no vineyard among the hundreds which quilt our hill-sides with green and gray and brown. He did not toil. He was always at home; walking slowly among his roses, reclining in a *chaise-longue* in the sunshine, dozing in his library window with his *Petit Parisien* on his stomach—he was always at home to all the world.

"We of Fleury knew nothing of M. Tacusier, although he had lived here for seven years. Even I knew nothing of him. We understood that he came from abroad, possibly Africa, possibly India, we were as vague as that. For that reason we did not reveive him as one of ourselves; one wants to know with whom one is dealing in this world. It is all very well to be a charming fellow."

I interrupted:

"That is the French attitude precisely! You do not give a man an opportunity here."

"Better say we insist on knowing to whom we are giving the opportunity," he amended smartly.

"On this certain morning Captain Cahusac dismounted from his motorcycle outside the stuccoed wall and pushed open the red door. You are to understand that I had the particulars of this meeting from our charming friend later.

"M. Tacusier was sitting in his library window, which was ajar. He was asleep in the morning sunshine, being of full habit. He woke at the jangle of the iron bell over the red door and went to the threshold to greet his guest.

"M. Tacusier was an enormous man, arched in front and back. His legs in the yellow-drab breeches and brown wrap leggings were like columns. His cheeks were blown out with good eating. His red lips were puffed, the lower one turned down pettishly, and his bright brown eyes protruded. He knew how to live, this M. Tacusier. We can take it that he was smiling as he stood under the brief porch; he was always smiling; it was the natural posture of his great, fair face.

" 'Enter, my captain,' he cried joyfully, taking the soldier's hand between his own and eying him attentively.

"Such was always his glance. It was interrogative, polite and persistent. He seconded this readily by questioning, showing an affable interest in his visitors' affairs, until he was apprised to his satisfaction of how they proposed to relate themselves to him. If one turned him aside lightly he soon perceived that his host was smilingly waiting. This was curiosity, but it was not vexing. It was pardonable in one so amiable. It is true that this curiosity aroused mine.

"But if he eyed the captain it was from habit; the captain was a transparent person. He was an immature youth whose wealth had kept him from the front during the war and whose military experience was now keeping him in the army. He was a dandy—feather-headed, confident, guileless, perpetually with an air of astonishment as if some one had just slapped him briskly on the forehead.

"THE captain eyed the old cognac which M. Tacusier had poured from a crystal decanter into a tiny winking goblet.

" 'I'm off to Maligny,' he said discontentedly, 'to corps headquarters to draw the pay. I had an appointment this fine morning, too!'

"M. Tacusier's large brown eyes twinkled with raillery.

" 'Perhaps—' he murmured.

He knew the affair must concern a lady.

"The captain burst into a laugh and slapped his host's knee.

" 'Exactly,' he cried. 'My idea to a dot.

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That's why I didn't take the side-car this morning, choosing to ride alone. I will meet the fair one on the way and none the wiser. That dog of an adjutant will find that I have a head of my own!'

" 'Then the sum of money is not very great,' suggested M. Tacusier. 'Perhaps you are a trifle too courageous to travel alone.'

" 'A matter of two hundred thousand francs,' said the captain off-handedly, with an effect of blowing that much from the end of his cigarette.

" 'That is a great sum,' said M. Tacusier, much impressed by his visitor's *sang-froid*. 'And you are not afraid to carry so much alone? But I presume it is in large notes and not easily negotiable.'

" 'On the contrary," said the captain, 'the money will be in notes of five, ten, twenty and fifty francs. As to safety—' he touched his small blonde mustache—'it is not a matter to be considered by a soldier.'

" 'And you are returning at nightfall? Ah well,' said M. Tacusier, smiling at the fire of split beech logs, 'it is a bold robber who would waylay Captain Cahusac. The police suppressed malefactors with an iron hand during the war. You will be quite safe. Still it is well not to talk of such matters.'

"And accordingly he changed the subject.

"The captain departed. M. Tacusier watched his motorcycle rising on the hillside, running like an ant along the white ribbon of road between the checkered vineyards. He waved his lawn handkerchief as it attained the summit.

"Then I think he added a sound, a cross between a snap of the jaws and a derisive sniff.

"He returned to his chair before the simmering fire which was breaking the Winter's chill of the interior of his house. He glanced at the great mahogany clock standing in the corner of the chamber and let his eye-lids droop. M. Tacusier went peacefully asleep. So much he told me here in this room.

"On the following morning the *charbonnier*, bending beneath a sack of charcoal which he was carrying to the rear of the house, addressed himself to M. Tacusier, dozing in his library window.

" 'Have you heard the news, *monsieur?*' he asked hopefully. The story was already stale in Fleury whence he had come. 'The captain, Cahusac, was murdered last night!'

" 'Captain Cahusac?' questioned M. Tacusier, opening his eyes to look searchingly at the dirty little man on his garden walk. 'No!'

" 'Captain Cahusac,' said the charcoal man delightedly. 'On the Maligny road!'

"M. Tacusier rested his elbow on the sill and his chin in the soft cushion of his palm.

" 'Speak!' he commanded.

"The charcoal man sat down on his sack and told the tale thoughtfully. He is a great chatterer, our *charbonnier*. He felt now that he might have a chance to relate his history elsewhere, perhaps often, for *vin blanc*, perhaps for *eau de vie*, and it was well to observe the telling passages. Captain Cahusac had been to him only a figure in the tapestry of military life in Fleury, an effect of colorful light and shade, and now he was only a character in a story.

" 'Very interesting!' said M. Tacusier and closed his eyes again and dozed.

The *charbonnier* addressed him several times without response and went slowly away, looking back to be recalled.

After several days the interest of Fleury dozed also. Such matters after all are the affair of the *Gendarmerie Nationale*. You have explained to me that in America there is no *Gendarmerie Nationale*, and that murders are ferreted out by the newspapers. But in Fleury? We have only our poor *tambour de Ville*, and it would be droll to march against such work armed with a drum.

"You are to imagine though that we who are charged with the peace and order of the Department did not doze. We pondered the affair. One could just grope about for the reek of my *confrere*, Gouley's vile Algerian tobacco. He pulled at his mustaches.

" '*Eh bien*,' he said for the hundredth time, 'this is then the work of a robber!'

"You smile, *monsieur*. But look you—here was robbery. That supposes a robber, isn't it so? That is the gentleman to sieze an opportunity. Each to his trade. We set to learning what robbers were among our people that night. It is our business to know everybody in this Department. Now, what strollers and wanderers had been among us?

"A WEEK later M. Tacusier sat on a mossy stone bench in his garden on the river's brim. He was fishing. He held a long bamboo wand, and his tiny hook was baited with a minute fly. Beside him on the stone was a little heap of

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fingerlings which he had caught. A minnow could have snapped at such game and brought them home in his mouth like a retriever. But M. Tacusier wanted no coarse carp or pike; his palate was delicate; he was a *gourmet*. The sky was blue, the clouds were white, the sun shone—so much for the weather report on this occasion.

"The iron bell over the red door in the wall tinkled.

"M. Tacusier saw a man entering. Through the doorway he caught a glimpse of a small van, painted a warm green, clapboarded, with stove-pipe projecting, and drawn by a small horse and a large dog. It was the van of a nomad.

"M. Tacusier smiled intently upon his visitor and resumed his sport.

This nomad was a low-set man with fair hair and faded blue eyes that were yet alive and mocking. He was a seller of basketwork, a *marchand du vannerie*. In his hands he carried a cradle, and on his head was a diminishing structure of baskets.

"'*Les coffrets, monsieur?*' he inquired, tendering his wares. '*Les corbeilles? Paniers?*'

"'Nothing,' said M. Tacusier, lifting another tasty morsel expertly from the dappled water.

"The basket-seller sat down on the bench also. It was pleasant by the river, and all nomads are lazy, good-for-nothing rascals.

"'Fried in new butter and eaten like sardines, these will be excellent," observed the nomad.

"M. Tacusier grunted, regarding his swaying cork.

"'It is a happy life you lead here,' said the nomad, unrebuffed. 'To imagine that you are always to be found in one spot like an old stump, while I am blown about by every wind of France, today in the Jura, tomorrow in the Côte d'Or, taking root nowhere.'

"'To each according to his deserts!' said M. Tacusier austerely.

"'Still one learns more by moving about,' said the nomad, as if the other's words had been an invitation and not a reproof. 'Today in Auxerre, tomorrow perhaps in Troyes, perhaps in Nancy—you have been in Nancy, monsieur?'

"M. Tacusier's smile was set.

"'And what might one learn in the North?' he said at last, drawing a robbed hook from the water.

"'About fishing, for example,' said the nomad blandly. 'There is excellent fishing where rise the Seine and the Marne. Have you seen the mountain at Chattillon from which springs the Seine? How clear and sweet is the water! Perhaps something, too, of fishermen. There is little news in such faraway places, and the people eke it out with old stories of departed desperadoes.'

"M. Tacusier cast aside a fly which had broken in his great fingers.

"'Here, now, how much more interesting!' exclaimed the nomad with a gesture. 'Here is a fine new murder to talk about. That is something to live for, I think. In this country one does not need to go back to some ancient Tub o' Lard for a tale. Do I annoy you, monsieur?'

"'Not at all,' said M. Tacusier, smiling full upon him. 'It is my rheumatism. Did you not tread against my foot? Always in the Spring I pay for my little pleasures of the Winter. It is wrong of me to expose myself to an inclement wind.'

"'You should go indoors,' said the nomad solicitously. 'Permit me to assist you!'

"The nomad proffered his shoulder and M. Tacusier rose from the bench as if compelled. They proceeded slowly to the house.

"M. Tacusier sank into the capacious chair behind the window. The nomad handed him the crystal decanter and a glass.

"'*Eh bien,*' sighed the rover, when his tongue had lapped dry the glass he had filled for himself, 'we were speaking of something, were we not?'

"'I have forgotten of what,' said M. Tacusier with polite regret.

"'Ah yes,' said the other with satisfaction. He had discarded his head-dress of baskets and was sitting in the shadow. 'It was about the murder. And I have told you that the police have done me the honor of crediting me with this fine business? I told you that?'

"'No,' said M. Tacusier with an alert motion of his head. 'A very absurd suspicion without doubt.'

"'You are not acquainted with the ways of the police,' said the nomad, shrugging his shoulders. 'Frankly, *monsieur*, I have had the misfortune to be suspected before. It is now their habit! We wanderers are not

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more mischievous than other folks, but we are exceedingly convenient scapegoats. We have vanished; the real thief keeps the booty; the police solve the mystery cheaply; the neighbors cease to suspect each other—all are content and no harm done. Give a dog a bad name and hang him, eh? If only I were like you, enjoying the respect and confidence of all! Picture suspecting the jolly M. Tacusier! It is to laugh.'

"He laughed.

" 'That would be droll,' he added.

" 'A good name is better than great riches,' admitted M. Tacusier, smacking his heavy red lips. 'One should avoid being put to his choice of course.'

" 'Yesterday,' said the nomad resentfully, 'the police entered my van while I was away on a commission and searched it. It is perhaps only a matter of hours before they will seize me.'

" 'But you will easily disprove it?' said M. Tacusier. 'You will tell them where you spent the night upon which the murder was done?'

" 'I do not think they will believe it,' said the nomad uneasily. 'To you I will say truthfully that I spent that night lying blind-drunk in my van behind the cemetery on the Maligny road. But how will that tell to the police? Can you see me before the *juge d'instruction?* I was last seen drinking heavily in Madame Lierre's *estaminet* and then proceeded down the Maligny road—where the pretty captain was found in the morning! I am alarmed, *monsieur.* Ah, you can understand nothing of this!'

"The nomad stared disconsolately at the polished pine floor.

" 'You are wrong to distrust the police,' advised M. Tacusier with his inflexible smile. 'The current notion that innocent men suffer for the guilty is a delusion fostered by rogues. It is your duty to submit yourself to the processes of the law.'

"HE WAS interrupted by a burst of unaffected laughter. He stopped speaking and waited.

" '*Monsieur,*' sighed the nomad wiping his eyes, 'I am a man who dearly loves his joke, but you, too, are gifted with rare humor. Come now, let us cease to talk in parables and substitutes!'

"He slid forward in his chair and sat on the edge, where the light from the window struck upon his bared forehead. It showed a deep scar starting almost from his eyes and running back into his fair hair.

" 'Do you recognize me, *monsieur?*' he smiled.

" 'I knew you at once,' replied M. Tacusier equably. 'You play the clown now as ever, my dear friend. You are Frontenac.'

" 'I am Frontenac,' snarled the nomad with a flash in his eyes like the blue flicker of a drawn knife. 'And do you know what that means to you? Let me tell you. Seven years ago one certain Tub o' Lard, a notorious scoundrel sentenced to twenty years penal servitude, was pardoned, having been of service to the police in bringing better men to punishment. Among those men so betrayed was I. I went to the penal settlement and this Tub o' Lard returned to France a free man. He reported once to the authorities in Nancy, his native place, and then he vanished. Poof! Like a match blown out. He was never seen again. But today it needs only a word in the proper quarter and the excellent M. Tacusier and his fine house and good name vanish also like a sheet whisked from a corpse, and in their stead stands—Tub o' Lard!'

"He waited a moment, but there was no response.

" '*Alors*, as to me? I have need now of a little corner of your sheet, *monsieur.* Do you understand me? I may be arrested. It will then be for you to say that I spent the evening in question here in your house. You gave me shelter, finding me drunk in the road. By confessing to this good deed you will only enhance your valuable reputation.

" 'Also, I must have money. If I am arrested for this business I must have money. If I am to flee I must have money. I propose that you give me at once the sum of ten thousand francs!'

"M. Tacusier rose.

" 'Return tonight,' he said harshly.

" 'Shall we say at eight o'clock, *monsieur?*' inquired the nomad.

" 'At eight o'clock.'

"They bowed. There was a contention as to who should pass first from the library. The nomad compromised by going first but scrupulously avoided turning his back to his smiling host.

" 'Tonight, *monsieur*, at eight!' he said and rang the bell on the stuccoed wall.

"M. Tacusier returned to the mossy bench beside the brimming river. He

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spitted a fly on the tiny hook and flecked it into the dappled water. He resumed his sport. There was iron in the blood of M. Tacusier.

"But terror had seized him by the roots of the hair. He was afraid. That high wall no longer shut out the world.

"He knew his people. He knew that, should the nomad repeat his tale to the police, suspicion would alight on M. Tacusier. Was he not an ex-convict? Had his servant overheard the conversation with Captain Cahusac that afternoon and drawn damning inferences? Here was a robber! Here was a wretch to do murder for money!

"The bamboo sagged in his relaxed hands.

"He had determined instantly to pay the exacted blackmail to the nomad and had demanded the delay only to consider methods. Perhaps the wanderer would indeed vanish as he had promised. Ah, but he would return. He would not forego such fat prey. At least he would talk. He was a drunkard and would exhale knowing hints and mysterious suggestions when in liquor.

"There was a way to deal with the affair. There had always been a way. He would find it. He had always found it. Terror pointed his wits now as ever.

"The long twilight drifted like smoke under the high yellow-barked beeches in the angle of the wall at the foot of his garden.

"M. Tacusier sighed contentedly. Here was a way, a way edged with destruction, but a way. It needed only iron determination and a thistledown lightness of tread. These were M. Tacusier's. He would be relentless and precise, like a vise.

"He entered the house with a light heart and ate with appetite the repast which his only servant had set for him. He spoke to her about the quality of the watercresses. They grew heavy and fine in the cold water near the spring.

"He had put the affair of the nomad aside as a thing consummated until his dinner was done.

"Then, with a choice cigar burning, he left his residence and walked slowly in the gathering darkness toward Fleury, leaning heavily at each step upon an ebony cane with a knobbed handle of silver. Such a stick might adorn a dandy or fell an ox.

"He walked up the main street, smiling at the shopkeepers and raising his cloth cap to the ladies. He entered this building and took that chair you are now sitting on. He had come to speak to me.

"'I HAVE been disturbed today, *monsieur*,' he said earnestly. 'I am sure I am doing my duty in apprising you at once. In a word, I have information as to the murderer of Captain Cahusac!'

"I listened attentively, motioning him to proceed.

"He bent forward.

"'I was visited today by a seller of basket-work, a nomad, who I believe knows more than he should about this terrible affair. Have you such a one under observation, *monsieur*?'

"I smoked quietly without answering.

"'I am indiscreet,' he said, accepting the rebuff. 'Permit me to say openly that this man told me he is the object of your suspicions and that he is now under surveillance.'

"'And what was the purpose of his visit to you?'

"'This person,' said M. Tacusier calmly, 'is not a stranger to me. He is in fact a man whom I assisted years ago while abroad. There was a certain compensation or award due him at that time as the result of his industry, and I saw that he received it.'

"'Your kindness is well known, *monsieur*,' I admitted.

"'He comes to me now,' continued M. Tacusier, 'and asks my aid, presuming on former favors. He finds me as ever a person of good reputation in my neighborhood. A compliment could have come from cleaner hands but I accept always, from the right hand and from the left.'

"'He suggested to me,' smiled my visitor, 'that I share my poor reputation with him, somewhat as the good saint shared his cloak with the beggar in the story. He is bold enough to admit that my cloak in that event would cover a multitude of sins. In a word, *monsieur*, he asked me to tell you in the event of his arrest that he had spent the night of the murder under my roof. For this untruth he offered me——'

"'Yes, *monsieur*?' I encouraged him.

"'Ten thousand francs!' said M. Tacusier.

"'Aha! He has then a large sum of money!' I exclaimed. 'That pieces out our case nicely.'

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" 'My precise thought,' said M. Tacusier, gratified.

" 'I will tell you, *monsieur*,' I said carefully, "that we have indeed suspected such a character. He was seen drinking heavily in the café of Madame Lierre on the Place du Marché that evening, and he departed toward Maligny, and thereafter the captain's body was found in that very road. What you tell me now clinches the matter. I will have him arrested at once!'

" 'Permit me, *monsieur*,' he interposed. 'I have been of some little assistance to you. You will let me continue to serve you. This brigand is coming to visit me at my house this evening at eight o'clock. I suggest that you apprehend him after he has completed his errand, and thus will be forged another link in the chain which must draw him in to his just reward.'

" 'That is good,' I assented. 'At eight o'clock, and at your house. A thousand thanks for your assistance, *monsieur*. I will not forgive myself if this wretch escapes me now.'

"I opened the door that the light might fall upon the step and cautioned him in descending. He had given me an admirable cigar.

"M. Tacusier returned to his house, bowing to the shopkeepers standing in their doorways, and patting the little children on the head. His affair was going forward in order, and he loved order and peaceful methods, now that he was in the full current of middle age. He leaned to rest a moment on the stone balustrade of the little bridge which carries the road over our river. I believe he was simply admiring the beauty of the night. He was a man incapable of misgivings when his mind had set.

"He entered his house.

"The mahogany clock in the corner of his library showed fifteen minutes to eight.

"M. Tacusier mounted to his room. He drew the curtained window to and closed and locked the door. He dropped the curtain over the pane in the inner wall which lighted the stairway. He opened with key a closet hidden in the outer wall and dragged an oaken chest thence into the light of his lamp.

"From the chest he took a thick sheaf of bank-notes and a flat, automatic revolver.

"He slid the weapon into the breast of his blouse and the notes into his pocket. He replaced the chest, locked the closet door and descended to the library.

"And now it was eight o'clock.

"The iron bell over the door outside jangled. M. Tacusier drew the window in.

" 'Enter, *monsieur*,' he called.

"A man came from the darkness and mounted to the house-door. M. Tacusier bowed him into the library. It was the nomad, Frontenac.

" 'I AM followed,' said the merchant of wickerware, glancing nervously about. 'As I came here I passed a shadow crouching against your garden wall and heard something move!'

" 'It is that goat of Mother Neret's,' said M. Tacusier. 'I saw the horns of the beast above the shrubbery an hour ago.'

" 'Perhaps, too, it was a wild boar,' rejoined the nomad sharply. 'I saw his great mustaches above the bush this minute! Why does M. Gouley, the *gendarme*, prowl behind bushes near your garden wall?'

" 'That is for you to say, my dear friend,' smiled M. Tacusier suggestively.

" 'Listen, *monsieur*,' growled the nomad. 'It is not for you to communicate with the police, do you understand? You will get nothing by that. They will joyfully relinquish me to sieze upon you when I have recounted your interesting history. Are you quite content as to that?'

" 'This is all unnecessary,' said M. Tacusier soothingly. 'Do we not understand each other? Let us attend to our business, my old comrade!'

" 'You have the money?' grumbled the rover.

" 'I have the money,' said M. Tacusier gently.

" 'It is little enough,' growled the nomad. 'Here you are like a fat slug in a nut, and here you remain enjoying life in your fine house, while I am driven out. Is that justice?'

" 'Justice is seldom done in this world,' acknowledged M. Tacusier. 'But reasonable people can always arrive at an arrangement. Shall we attend to ours?'

" 'Give me the money, then,' muttered the nomad.

" 'And you will go away at once?' smiled M. Tacusier, savoring a sweet satisfaction. 'You will give me your word that you will forget the name of Tub o' Lard?'

" 'My word of honor upon it!' exclaimed the nomad impatiently.

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" 'It would be unreasonable to ask more,' murmured M. Tacusier. 'Here then is your money!'

"He laid the sheaf of purple notes upon the table between them. His right hand rested within his blouse and clutched the haft of the automatic.

"The nomad counted the money, which was in notes of fifty francs.

" 'Ten thousand,' he concluded and sat silent for a space, staring at the little heap of papers.

" 'Was that a step outside?' he ejaculated.

" 'Pocket it!' said M. Tacusier. 'Put it carefully away. That was only Medor, my hound, scratching at the door.'

"The nomad arose, abandoning the money on the table and tiptoed to the outer door. He opened it quickly and silently and gazed into the darkness.

" 'Enter then, Medor,' he called.

"He turned and presented a pistol at the gross figure with the shining eyes which had half-risen from its crouch beside the table.

" 'Do not move, my friend, Tub o' Lard,' he warned. 'Do not move!'

"My confrère, M. Gouley, came quickly into the chamber, and behind him was I. M. Tacusier's hand was arrested in his breast and before him on the table lay the ten thousand francs."

My friend Renard ceased speaking. He smoked quietly. I said nothing. I knew he waited to triumph over me.

"And it was part of the money taken from Captain Cahusac," said my friend Renard at last. "It was indeed the only part of the money which we could trace, the remainder consisting of five and ten franc notes of whose numbers we had no record. We found this remainder in the chamber above.

"We investigated the past of this charming M. Tacusier for no other reason than because he was a stranger," said my friend, Renard. "And thus we came upon our good Frontenac, who was easily persuaded to play the spy for us. We had no doubt that the blackmail would be paid, and we trusted to find thus, part of the stolen money.

"I am satisfied as to his purpose in coming to me. He saw an opportunity to kill two birds with one stone. Had Frontenac pocketed that money, he would have been a dead man, and thus Tub o' Lard would have closed his mouth forever, and likewise closed the affair of Captain Cahusac. We could not have doubted that Frontenac had done the murder."

"Then you had no real reason to suspect M. Tacusier?" I asked.

"But who else would have done this deed?" said my friend Renard. "Look you! Each man to his trade. If I see a citizen pouring ipecac into a spoon I know that there is the work of M. Dumas, our *apothecaire*. And if I hear the roll of a drum and a voice crying in the highway 'Cognac is forbidden to soldiers!' Do I suspect that the voice is that of M. Bergerand who keeps the Hôtel L'Étoile? *Mais non!* It is our *tambour de Ville*. To each his trade. *Alors*, when a fine piece of brigandage is done among us, I look about for a fine brigand, is it not so?"

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Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance: many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

WE HAVE already had one reply to the inquiry about the ancient ruins of Zululand and now here is an interesting letter along the same lines but centering on other African ruins:

Wheatridge, Colo.

I read W. C. Roberts letters of inquiry with special interest, as it recalled a trip I made through Matabeleland and Mashonaland some years ago. In answer I would say that I know nothing of ruins in Zululand, but over the Plateau of Southern Matabeleland and Mashonaland from Tate to Dhlodholo situated in the Mattoppo Hills about fifty miles southeast of Bulawayo to Fort Victoria are ruins, walls and ancient mining shafts, a few of which I have seen.

THE largest of these, the Zimbabwer ruins, is about fifteen miles from Fort Victoria. It consists of a large round *solid* tower about forty feet high within a circular wall fifteen feet thick near the ground, tapering off at the top to about seven feet. This wall is at least thirty feet high and constructed of roughly chipped granite of a uniform size, about six inches high and twelve inches long, laid upon one another without cement or mortar of any kind. I understand that the towers in other ruins, as in this one, are perfectly solid.

Soap-stone hawks on pedestals were discovered in the ruins; also fragments of bowls with hunting scenes depicted on them. These have been removed to Cape Town Museum. The general impression is that these are of Semitic origin, probably Phenician. The Makalangar natives of that district have a distinctly Arab cast of countenance, having the arched noses and thin lips rarely seen in the Kaffirs. If the natives have any traditions as to the origin of these ruins they keep it to themselves and are in great fear of ghosts.

THE Dhlodholo ruins, though vastly interesting, are not as large as the Zimbabwer. The walls are about twenty feet high.

North of Bulawayo I found a few gold beads in some ruins. It was sixteen years ago since I was through that country and archeologists have in all probability found some clue as to their origin.

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I have sometimes wondered if there could be any connection between the soap-stone hawks of the Zimbabwer and the Egyptian goddess Hathor, whose emblem was a hawk and the special goddess of mines.

I don't mean to infer that these crude buildings are of Egyptian origin. But might they not have been built by a servile race who had adopted their religion in part? Just conjecture, that's all.—A. H. GRICOURT.

FROM Thomas McMorrow a word or two concerning his story in this issue:

New York.

I can not put down here a reasoned statement of the causes of "Tub o' Lard." Stories are not written from rigid premises, are they? But I remember *Tub o' Lard's* garden very well. I leaned on its mossy gate and studied its recesses one evening this Spring. I was looking for a bad man who was A. W. O. L. from his regiment and was lying out somewhere along the river. I remember the tremendous stone wall which hedged the garden, a wall that might have turned the stroke of a seventy-five, and the circling paths and flower-beds—no foot of it all but had been lovingly contrived, and the dappled sheet of river that lapped its further side.

IN AMERICA we don't know how to live. We are busy piling up the raw materials, the wealth and the station, tomorrow we will raise an elegant and spacious edifice, and we die in harness and have not joined the first stones of our House of Life. But the French aren't builders. They live contentedly in the gray homes of their fathers. Change agitates them. They have reduced life to a working equation, and do not want to change its terms. They are not adventurers. They pour into your laboring ear a tale of discontent until you ask, "Then you are Bolshevist here?" "No, no, monsieur, we are anti-militarist." Their discontent is with the prospect of change!

So also they like their human relations fixed. They want to know what to think of people. They abhor fluidity. Thus a Boche is a Boche. "But our American Boches have stood by our Government. The American Army has many Boches, and they have been good soldiers." "Do not trust them, monsieur: a Boche is a Boche."

That's about the idea. If there is a more concrete cause of "Tub o' Lard" it is then in the old wife's tales that Madame Mathieu told me as I sat in her dark kitchen of mornings and watched her draw roast rabbits and heaps of laundry and pails of hot water and puddings and such trifles out of a wood-stove as big as the ordinary magician's hat.—THOS. MCMORROW.

AN INTERESTING letter, this. I've written to the men he mentions but as yet have had no reply. In several places a dash is substituted for a proper name. The writer is referring to the short article by E. A. Brininstool.

Among other things, I'll admit I was much surprised to learn I had met Billy the Kid in the pages of "Ben Hur" years before I ever heard of him under his workaday name.

U. S. S. *Beaufort.*

Just finished reading the article "Billy the Kid" and certain things in it do not coincide with what I learned of him when I was a boy in New Mexico.

FOR instance, I always heard he was a Tennesseean, born in that State. Again, in the article in question, one would infer that Billy was as black-hearted as they are made. His killing the second guard with a shotgun from the window and the salutary phrase he used are again misapplicable in morality. This guard had been in the habit of befouling Billy's food in a most detestable manner and I have heard that Billy told him just before he shot him that never again would he have the opportunity to commit again the indignities he had perpetrated. Furthermore, the first thing Billy did, when free, was to demand food.

GARRETT, again, was hid from view behind the bedstead and the Kid never saw him till he was almost on top of him. The Kid then turned to his Mexican friends and had got as far as "Who is this?" (speaking in Spanish) when Garrett shot him. The reputation Garrett then earned for unethical gun-play later cost him his life. Garrett tried to collect the full reward for Billy's life but never did, as old General Lew Wallace, who respected the Kid, saw to that.

Your correspondent does not mention that Lew Wallace advertised in all New Mexico papers for Billy to come and see him, which the Kid did and also explained away many lies which had been told of him. Wallace busied himself immediately revoking the territorial reward offered for Billy, "Dead or Alive." It might interest you to know that one of the better characters in "Ben Hur" is a portrayal of Billy in a different atmosphere.

You might write a man named Phillips who lives on a ranch three miles from Alamogordo, N. M., for information. Phillips was a deputy U. S. Marshal just about that time and was, at one time, in a position to arrest Black Jack Ketchem had he known he was wanted.

Also write Oliver M. Lee, of ——, N. M. Lee could give you the straight facts in this case, for while Billy worked for the Chisholms, still the Chisholms were one of the three big cattle men who divided the districts known as the Miller, Chisholm and Lee interests. Chisholm had the Pecos Valley and Lee the Sacramento Valley.

—— could tell a lot, if he wanted, for he was sufficiently mixed up in the Lincoln County War to be immensely relieved when Judge Shepherd disappeared the day after staying at the Pelman ranch. Nothing was found of the Judge's rig but a burnt wheel, and —— himself says he knows nothing about it and the Judge's disappearance is a mystery to him. Shepherd had the documentary evidence on him at the time of his disappearance which was said to be sufficient to hang many, he being on his way to Santa Fé from Lincoln.

—— killed two men while I was there and the tale of one of the attempts to arrest him for the death of one of the men is almost hilarious. Caught at a disadvantage, —— recovered his gun, drove the Deputy under a galvanized water-tank where the

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Deputy hid in some dog burrows, and —— then shot the tank full of holes and let 50,000 gallons of water trickle into the holes, the Deputy up to his neck in water and afraid to show his head, while —— went to Alamogordo, surrendered, was bailed, and then returned. These men can give you the facts.—G. B. WILLMAN, Lt. U. S. N. R. F.

HOW do you feel about this suggestion? The use of such words as "How" or "Bayete" would lose value in the regions where they are used for ordinary purposes. The whole idea of a password and grip is up to you.

New York.

Re the "Armorial bearings" of "The House of Adventure," you ask: "Does it get by?" I should say rather. Personally I think it a ripping idea, and the design A 1.

HOW about a password for use when two "comrades" wearing the "71" button meet? To me this would add color to the Camp-Fire camaraderie, as a man might lose his button and it might be found by some one not "of" the clan. This finder might be a delicatessen-store clerk with about as much adventure in him as a tape-worm, and this would take the exclusiveness (that somehow exists despite the fact that there are no dues, no ceremonies of admission, etc.) away from our Camp-Fire.

I suggest something on the order of the Elks' countersign of "Hello Bill,"—say: "Hello Comrade." This is a little used expression, comrade, these days. You might even use some aboriginal greeting of some kind like the Indian "How." To this one might add "Comrade," thus making "How Comrade." Again, we could use the Zulu's royal salute, "Bayete." I don't know whether I have spelled this right or not, you might ask Thomas S. Miller about that.

How about some grip or other, or an unusual hand-shake, say, both chaps putting their right hand on each other's left shoulder, or shaking with the left hand instead of the right?

Of course all this may be screamingly funny and childish, but, dash-it-all, the Masons, I believe, have "stuff" like this, so why not the comrades of the "Camp-Fire"?—LAMBERT TERRY.

SOME time ago we heard W 216 say some interesting things about tropical colonies. Now here is something from Edgar Young on the same subject, differing, as you will see, on a number of points.

I'm no authority on Latin-American colonies but I'm very sure on one point, which Mr. Young also brings out: Before you even make any definite plans apply to the Pan-American Union and others of the very best and surest authorities for guidance on all points. Unless you are pretty thoroughly familiar with Latin-American conditions—and perhaps even if you are—you don't know the colonizing game down there and it's always wise to know any game before you play it. And a game down there is generally not the same as the same game up here.

Brooklyn.

In 1916 the United Fruit Company owned and leased a total of 1,200,450 acres of ground, were operating 2,932 miles of railway and 1,042 miles of tramway. They owned 18,039 head of cattle, 6,009 head of horses, asses and mules, had $50,765,-234.17 (book cost) invested in houses and lands and equipment, had 23 ships in active service. Their earnings from bananas and miscellaneous tropical products (pineapples, citrus fruits, coconuts, cocoa, rubber, etc.) was $8,584,951.85 and from sugar $4,758,034.62, making a total of $13,342,986.47 net income for 1916. The land they had under cultivation was 246,679, and the unimproved 953,771, acres. These statistics were sent me by Mr. Minor C. Keith and are contained in the Seventeenth Annual Report and dated Sept. 30, 1916. I have no doubt they have made as great strides during the past two years as they did the two previous ones before this report, unless the taking of their ships for war use has put them back temporarily.

MR. EARLEY VERNON WILCOX, of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, states in his book "Tropical Agriculture," New York, D. Appleton & Company, 1916, page 37, "In Porto Rico, white men working cooperatively have developed a $3,000,000 fruit industry from nothing in a period of ten years. Moreover, white colonies of fruit and truck growers are prospering in Cuba, particularly in La Gloria, Herradura, and Isle of Pines." This entire chapter which is headed *Economic and Social Conditions* is well worth reading, and, for that matter, the entire book, while dealing particularly with the eastern tropics, is of great use to a man thinking of settling in the tropics of any country. In his bibliography he mentions forty-one other books on the subject he has consulted and a great number of periodicals mostly published in various places in the tropics.

From the two instances I mentioned in the second paragraph, which are not the only ones by any means, it is to be seen that farming the tropics both cooperatively and by stock companies pays big money. The list of companies that have arisen and sold stock and fleeced the public, and the number of cooperative colonies that have failed, are numerous. I suppose it's about like success in all other lines of endeavor. I have heard, but will not vouch for the truth of the statement, that the United Fruit Company was originally started with some money derived from gold that was dug from an old Chiriqui graveyard in Costa Rica. It is within my own tropical experience when it was a struggling little company.

MY CANDID belief is that a company centering on pineapples in Central America could within a few years put the Hawaiian companies out of business, due to two reasons: nearer to market and better pines. The quality of Central American and Panamanian pines is proverbial. Any old canal digger who has been to Toboga Island can vouch for this statement. It is also my candid belief that a company engaging in banana culture in Central America will go broke, for the power of the big business is very great and it is a

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power in Central American politics that is not to be sneezed at. There are also many unexploited fields that are open such as drugs, tans and dies, spices and flavorings, perfumes, oils, gums, etc., which have been exploited in the Eastern tropics, as well as fiber-producing plants, beverages, tobacco, and many thousand fruits that are delicious but are unknown in this country. The bottom has dropped out of rubber, due to the plantation rubber being raised in the East by British planters, from a few Hevea seeds that were smuggled out of Brazil under false pretenses about forty years ago. They are raising the highest grade of Para rubber on these plantations. Anything that has been done by the Eastern British planters can be duplicated in Central America, and can be exceeded, for Central America is a better climate than India. I have seen black pepper and spices growing on an American farm within a few miles of the canal zone in the republic of Panama.

PEACHES, apples, and other American fruits act peculiarly at sea-level in the tropics but do well at altitudes of from 5,000 feet up. Also American cattle, horses and poultry do not thrive when first imported. An improvement of the native breeds is a better idea. Chickens imported into Panama refused to lay an egg. A man a few years ago went through the tropics buying the best native breeds and at last accounts had 60,000 in Panama which were doing good laying. The best of milk cattle do not give the quantity of milk they do here and the second generation do not grow so large, but the native breeds seem to thrive. My own opinion is that either the zebu or goat is a better milk animal. While in Brazil I noted that the native cattle growers were crossing about a quarter zebu blood through their cattle to avoid native fevers. Pure zebu meat is strong and smells rank, but a quarter-blood is not noticeable.

IT ALL comes to the same thing. A man should read up and find out what has already been proven concerning tropical agriculture before he tries his hand at it and the British methods in India and the American methods in Hawaii are the best ones for him to look into, for he will learn little from the native Central American farmer who is tilling the soil after the Indian methods of his ancestors with a machete, a crooked stick for a plow, and getting his products to market on his own or his peons' back. This does not mean the German, American and English farmers who have settled in these countries, who are farming according to what they have found out was the best way for them. I saw many of them as I walked through the various countries.

Some of these started in on as little as four hundred *billetes* (twenty dollars), got a little patch of ground and got a thatched hut on it and then began hiring the natives to work for them. Wages vary for farm labor. We paid our laborers on the National Railways of Nicaragua between fifteen and twenty-one cents per day and they boarded themselves. We paid locomotive engineers and conductors twenty-four dollars, and telegraph operators and agents from twelve to sixteen dollars American gold per month. This was in 1914 and I do not know what they are paying now. I would say that farm labor as a general thing all over Central America would not average over twenty-five cents per day and would run less if the old rule of giving each family their sack of beans per month was held to. The United Fruit pays top wages to the negroes they import from the West Indies and I believe pay as much as one dollar per day in some places, which is many times more than the negro is used to at home. Any man who labors in the fields is of lower caste and I fail to see why an American should go down there and get out and work except as foreman or manager of the natives when they work so cheap. By doing so he would lose caste in the eyes of the native laborers and native well-to-dos. I am sure I would not do it. I once had a pretty fair four-room house and kitchen built for forty dollars American money. It was thatched on top and the walls were woven of bamboo. I wasn't farming at the time and just had it built to have a quiet place to stay.

I WAS raised on a farm in Virginia and have done quite a bit of farm labor, have worked through the harvest in our own West and in the Argentine, and have been foreman on tropical cane plantations, and have walked through many miles of banana plantations, as well as watching natives farming as I paused to rest when I was traveling, and have worked on many railroads that handled farm products as freight, and after all this I would not know what to say in regard to a tropical colony, except to keep out of low swampy country such as the colonies occupied at Pachuca, Gracias a Dios and San Juan del Norte. Any man who tried to establish a colony of white people on the Mosquito Coast was a fool for the want of sense. The Mosquito Coast (which is not called that on account of the insect *mosquito* but from the name the Spaniards gave the native Indians) runs from Yucatan to Panama and is low and unhealthy, and until it is cleaned up as Colon has been, or as the United Fruit Company cleans up their camps, is no fit place for white men. The town Matagalpa he mentions is on the railroad I was auditor for and is a healthy place. As far as that is concerned the coast of Mexico is the same. A white man does not thrive in a low, swampy, humid place until it has been drained and sanitated, for the mosquitoes keep him full of malaria.

ONE would not speak of Mexico City being enervating if he had ever been there, especially if he was there during the Winter, and a comparison of the temperature of Mexico City with any of our cities will show it to be a better temperature and with less variation than anything we have. Strawberries are for sale every day of the year in Guadalajara. Mazatlan, Guaymas, Salina Cruz, Vera Cruz, San Geronimo, etc., which are on the coast, are enervating, although the temperature rarely exceeds 85° F. And the nights at Mazatlan and Guaymas are cool enough to call for blankets the year round.

Roughly speaking, the temperature falls four degrees for every 1,000 of ascent up the mountains. (Bogota, Colombia, has the most even climate in the world. It's average temperature the year round is 60° F.) This fact holds good all along the high plateau and mountain chain that extends from end to end of Central America. Excellent climates are to be found in San José, C. R., Tegucigalpa, Honduras, the *pueblos* of Nicaragua between Managua and Granada,

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Guatemala City, and all the towns, cities and places of the higher country. There are parts of all the Central American countries where mosquitoes are almost unknown. The Pacific side of all Central America averages about half the rainfall of the Atlantic side, even in so short a distance as that between Panama and Colon, and both places are at sea-level. Incidentally there are places in the republic of Panama where the climate is excellent and where cool weather may be found. A good account of tropical climate is given in Chapter I of Mr. Wilcox's book, which is much better than I can give here; also good accounts are given in the monographs distributed by the Pan-American Union, of Washington, D. C. I am quoting both these sources as authentic, both being a part of the U. S. Government and written with no ulterior motive.

ANY Central American country would welcome and help a colony of American farmers. In fact they are doing all they can do to get American farmers interested in their countries. Due to the many frauds that have been put across on the Americans by sharks of various degrees of crookedness, I think the best manner to start a project of this kind would be through the Pan-American Union direct with the Government of the country selected, and in this manner guarantee titles to land, or through some company like Brown Bros. & Seligman, who own a half interest in the National Railways of Nicaragua, run the banks of the country, and own large holdings of property, or other company. I do not know the sentiments of the United Fruit Company on this score, but most of their land is low lying and needed for the purpose they are using it.

I am sure a query from a party large enough to colonize any great tract of land would be taken up by the Pan-American Union and acted upon. They are in touch with conditions at all times and have men on the ground down there who could help anything they backed. This society is what the author meant by the Bureau of Pan-American Republics. It would also be best to get the ideas of their experts on any place and any project intended and act along the lines they suggested. I would much rather suggest them than any individual or set of individuals for fear some one would bob up and do a bit of trimming the unwary. Of course Brown Bros. & Seligman are reliable if they should wish to father a colonization scheme on their holdings.

SO FAR as Mexican colonization is concerned I have seen most all of them at first hand and some of them have done, or were doing, well, before the revolution. I was there during the revolution but have not been back since and do not know how they fared. The Mormons were good colonizers and there were two prosperous colonies located on the Vera Cruz and Pacific Railway and one on the Pan-Americano, south of Tehauntepec. The Mormons go right into it on a native basis and without the speech would be taken for peons.

W. 216 mentions crops and *live stock* being different from ours. Crops are different as to most things, with the exception of some of our cereals, but live stock consists of horses, cattle, sheep and goats, as well as razor-back hogs. India has different cattle, but not our own tropics.

CONCERNING Rex Beach, I suppose Rex would draw the long bow in fiction to make a point, like all the rest of us, but I am pretty sure if he made the statement attributed to him that it was a slip of the pen. I met Mr. Beach at Gatun and at the time he had a tapir's head he had cut from an animal killed by him back in the jungles with a body of Gatun sportsmen. I talked with him for some time, seated on a baggage-truck, concerning the trip I had made overland and he wanted me to go back the same way with him. He was in Panama for some time and I am sure he saw enough banana bushes and rubber trees (in the park in Ancon if nowhere else) to know the difference.

All the colonies W. 216 mentions failed on the Mosquito Coast and well they might.

Compare the death rate of tropical America with that of England, France, and this country per 1,000. About the same per cent.

Bosh! about going in large parties. I am sure that is just the way *I* wouldn't go. What for? As for the *strong* handling the *weak* in a colony of 100, what method are they going to use to enforce discipline, and who is going to back them? The strong and the weak are relative terms and mean nothing until the draw-bar pull of the part of a man's anatomy above the eyes can be measured, and there is no known machine for the purpose yet. Houses should be in line. We are farming and a man should live on his ground, or hire some one else to live on it, and the line would be a long one provided there were many colonists and they had many acres. Live on the ground, say I, and build straw ranchos for Juan and Pedro, Jesus, José, Pancho, Maria and Concha.

My last opinion is that the ideas of W. 216 are a bit hazy.

MARKETING is what put many people on the Isle of Pines out of business. A colony should be large enough to charter their own ship to market direct with this country or raise something they can can and ship when they have a cargo. The methods of the United Fruit on a small scale would succeed. So far as making a living is concerned a man can get that with a bare machete from the day he lands, but money-making means getting the stuff to market and the native markets in Central America, with the exception of Panama, are not very good. South America has much better native markets as a rule. I scarcely think the United Fruit would cooperate with any colony. I use the word "colony" for want of a better one, for I am thinking all the time of independent owners employing native and black help.

I guess that's about all I can crowd into a letter. The opinions of *Adventure's* readers might prove interesting.—EDGAR YOUNG.

WE HAVE met *Zari* in other tales and we already know that L. Patrick Greene knows Africa at first-hand. A word from him in connection with his story in this issue:

Boston.

It might be of interest to the Camp-Fire folks to know that I actually witnessed a "healing" such as I have described in this story. The patient was a native who appeared to be in a very bad way. He had a very high fever and was without doubt

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on the border of the "land of the Spirits of the Great Great." The witch doctor went through a much more elaborate performance than the one I have described, before giving his patient the magic potion. But, be that as it may, it is a fact that from the time he took the medicine, or (as the witch doctor would have it) from the time the evil spirit was extracted, the man began to get better. The bone was, I remember, the lucky-bone of a chicken!

In the interests of truth I am compelled to add that this particular witch doctor was a "bad actor," and he was afterward sentenced to a long term of imprisonment for attempting to poison one of his patients who had offended him.—L. PATRICK GREENE.

REMEMBER the pictures of a sword in Camp-Fire some months ago—a small sword that my friend Robert J. Smith found in a junk-shop in Piqua, Ohio, back about 1901 and gave to me? Neither he nor I nor any of the numerous people who had seen it during some eighteen years was able to identify it in any way, or even the country or continent from which it came. But Camp-Fire turned the trick at the first try.

After writing me, Mr. Reisenberg, who is a well-known expert on tropical products, came in to see the weapon personally, examined it under a lens and pronounced it undoubtedly genuine.

Does any of you, by any long chance, know how it got into that Piqua shop?

And now Mr. Reisenberg asks a question in his turn. Is there among us any one of the twenty-five men he took on board the *Maria P.* at Kingston, Jamaica, about 1883 or 1884?

Also is there among us any one of the officers and Annapolis naval students who, on a U. S. surveying vessel in the Gulf of Mexico, once gave the *Maria P.* her exact position, as explained in his letter?

New York.

Your sword of which you write and give cut should be very valuable and I would like to see it, to give a better history perhaps than I can write. The small flowers are Edelweis and the large mountain roses which grow on a higher elevation—and smell (the Edelweis does not)—from Salzkammergut through the Tyrol and Carpathians in extinct Austria-Hungary. The word "Bandur" goes far back before the great Napoleon and is connected with the history of Andreas Hofer, the great Tyrolian Patriot who was shot in Mantua, Italy—sacrificed by the then reigning Emperor Francis of Austria.

THE meaning of "Bandur" carried a classification of liberators or fighters of foreign enemies and originally came from Hungary, which especially the figure refers to, with leather (chamois skin) breeches, tiger pelt and the old bow and arrow (similar to those the archers used) and the stiff leather breast-plate. You will find the handle end to be a chamois hoof.

The figure itself dates still further back, more to the time of Maria Theresa, Empress of Austria-Hungary, when the Honveds of Hungary and the Banduren with the help of the Russians saved her from the Turkish invasion. The Banduren were not exactly a class or tribe or association as we have today, but can be likened to our pioneers in this country (for defense against the Indians), choosing their leaders for the time being and retaining their title of Bandur.

"Vivat" is a true original Austrian expression condensed and meaning "Hip, Hip, Hurray!"

I DOUBT if there are many such swords still in existence even in Austria, although I have seen one in an Imperial castle but of a later date on account of the figure being different. What I was told then (that is 50 years ago) was that there were the gunsmiths who also made swords, shaping, tempering and gunbarrel-boring, all by hand. It only could be afforded (where decoration came in) by wealthy mountain farmers. Therefore your sword may have been made for a leader. I wonder how it came over here! A real owner, a descendant, would never have given it up at any price; they were heirlooms.

If you can make an appointment when I could see it and have a magnifying glass handy, I may be able to give you a lead to follow up further into the history of it.

As to the figure's breeches on your sword—they are full length. In the one I saw the breeches were shorter, coming only to the knees, with stockings, indicating an earlier date for yours. Also the other had heavy nailed shoes for mountain climbing, whereas yours has full-length breeches and leather sandals, which proves that yours belongs to the Lower Valley.

IF IT is not infringing too much on your good nature I would like to make a call through the Camp-Fire whether there is any fellow left of the 25 men whom I took with me on the *Maria P.*, an Italian steamer from Kingston, Jamaica, by signing them up to the ship for a shilling a month and taking them to New Orleans as an excuse, all being stranded in Jamaica (and many more) from the French Canal about 1883 or '84. The only way I could take them with me was to have them help look after my banana cargo.

If they remember the adventurous trip we had I would like them to communicate to address below, especially if they remember the dates to refresh my memory.

THE same would apply also to the Annapolis naval students and officers on board a U. S. surveying vessel in the Gulf of Mexico where one evening I was chasing them with the *Maria P.* until they dropped anchor for the night, in order to find out from them where I was. Especially I want to repeat my thanks to the Captain who permitted me to bring the boatswain on board as a witness (being the only one of the crew who could talk a little English) where he so kindly and smilingly explained to us in their big chart-room the exact position we were in just then.

After being their guest for five hours (everybody writing letters) I took with me a couple of mail-bags for the home folks. There were certain reasons I

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could not take advantage of some of their families' extended invitations for a visit, received at the time.

Some time ago I saw Commander McCounly in Washington, but, although being an extraordinary occurrence, he thought it would be difficult under the circumstances to find the record of the log after so many years without knowing the name of the ship. But I never will forget the *Maria P.* as long as I shall live, even if she is at the bottom of Mediterranean for many years, where she was lost as soon as she got back to her home waters I heard afterward. With best wishes for our Camp-Fire.—F. S. REISENBERG, P. O. Box 468, New York City.

ALL you need do is write the titles and authors' names of the ten stories you consider best, given in order of preference, and mail us the sheet of paper to reach us not later than December thirty-first. If you like, add as many as ten more for honorable mention. You see, the time draws near for our annual vote by readers on the ten best stories published during the year. As in past years, short stories, novelettes, novels and serials are included, poems "Camp-Fire and the other departments are barred out. The issues covered are those dated January 3, 1919, to December 18, 1919, inclusive. Serials only parts of which are contained in these issues are included.

We very sincerely want your cooperation and help in getting for *Adventure* the kinds of story and the authors that a majority of our readers like best. If you know of a better way of furthering this cooperation than is the annual vote by readers, name it, for we are ready to try any legitimate plan that will help register your wishes in the making of the magazine. It's not only common sense to strive for this but it's a lot happier and more comfortable all around if people work together in friendly fashion.

WHILE the departments are excluded from the vote, we'll be more than glad to get suggestions for improving them. Or adding to them, but don't forget that "Letter-Friends" and "Wanted" have already been tried, and, though successful and popular, had to be given up because two or three readers abused them.

And if you have any suggestions concerning the magazine in general or any part of it, by all means send them in. I mean constructive suggestions that will definitely point out ways for improvement. Wherever we can meet your ideas we will, but remember that it is the majority whom we must please and that, while a given plan may please a minority and perhaps us here in the office, if it fails to please the majority it is not warranted.

But the only way to find out what the majority want is for the readers themselves to tell us. And you are one of the readers.

THERE is no doubt about it, "greasers" are not popular in this country and haven't been for many, many years. But are all greasers bad and are all Mexicans greasers? And isn't the seemingly inherent prejudice of northern races against Spanish and other southern blood largely responsible for our feeling about the Mexicans and the Central and South American peoples and, if so, is this prejudice a just judgment? Or merely a lack of understanding due to difference? Certainly the Latin-American opinion of us is a most unflattering and contemptuous one. We consider *their* opinion ill founded; they consider ours the same.

Mexico has been a pollution for some time, but it does not follow that every Mexican or, still less, every one of Spanish blood, is polluted. Spain is half a dozen different peoples, each differing vastly from the others. On this side of the Atlantic Spanish blood has generally been mixed with many others including American. And are all these just greasers and, if so, can it be that all greasers are our inferiors? Hardly.

I don't suppose anything could drop the word "greaser" from our vocabulary but, well, let's have a little more sense about it. For the rest, Miss Trujillo presents the case very well in the following letter.

AS TO the use of Spanish words in our stories I fear Miss Trujillo speaks rather hastily. She can hardly be familiar with all the dialects and colloquialisms of all the various districts between the U. S. and Cape Horn. This criticism is an old story with us and with other magazines; we have never found any authority who could pass on all the local usages of Spanish and it has been found most practical to depend on the writer for knowledge of idiom in the particular district he has chosen for his story and almost always has known personally. It would be easy enough to make all characters in all stories talk perfect academic Spanish, only in real life they wouldn't talk any such thing.

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Masquero, New Mexico.

For several years I have been a very much interested reader of your magazine including your "Camp-Fire" department. It has been a great pleasure to me and at the same time I have often felt very much hurt by some of the stories that I have read therein.

TO BEGIN with I suppose that at heart I, too, am an adventurer, at least I like to take my adventures through reading of those stirring things that happen to others. Perhaps it is an hereditary taint for being a lineal descendant of the old Spanish Conquistadores, I suppose that a love of adventure is more or less inherent in my innermost being. And right here rests my complaint against *Adventure* and its writers. I suppose that you would call me Mexican or, as you so often say in your magazine, "Greaser," notwithstanding the fact that my forefathers landed in this country a quarter of a century before the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers and brought civilization and Christianity to this little known part of the Southwest long before it was brought to the Eastern shores of our continent. In fact we are more truly American through long residence of our forefathers than ninety per cent. of those who pride themselves upon their Americanism. Then, too, we are proud, and justly so, of our record of patriotism.

Notwithstanding that we were but recently forcibly adopted into the Union, my native State of New Mexico furnished more soldiers to the Union Army during the Civil War than any other State in the Union according to population. And needless to say the majority of them were native sons bearing Spanish names. And a roster of the New Mexico soldiers during the World War would show a predominating number of native sons bearing Spanish names.

ALTHOUGH almost completely isolated from the rest of the continent for a long period of time, our forefathers kept alive the light of Christianity, continued in almost classical purity the beautiful Spanish language and waged a terrible and continual warfare against the barbarous hordes of Indians that surrounded them on all sides.

During later years they have not enjoyed the benefits of a good school system, as have the citizens of other States but have made good citizens, intelligent to a remarkable degree and, where given the advantage of even a poor school system, have produced some very noble and able citizens.

SO YOU see it is with considerable sadness that we read these tales of adventure that seek to give an incorrect idea of our native Mexican citizens, in much the same way that the entire West was given an unenviable reputation as a bloody ground where Indians, cowboys and cut-throats paraded down the streets of little towns that were in reality more law-abiding than the larger towns of the East where civilization was supposed to be much further advanced.

To term the Mexican people "Greasers" is an insult to every intelligent man, woman or child of Spanish descent, and there are many of them. Another very common mistake is to call us citizens of the United States who happen to be of Spanish descent "Mexicans," since that designation really belongs only to those people who are citizens of Mexico.

ALSO if you would have your writers use intelligent Spanish when attempting to quote Spanish words that they may have chanced to hear, it would add much to the attractiveness of the stories. Like any other language that has long been isolated from its cradle, a great many colloquialisms and incorrect expressions have crept into the language but the "stuff" that is sometimes used by your writers is absolutely ridiculous and used by no person having even a slight knowledge of Spanish or Mexican, if you prefer to call it that.

HAVING been editor, publisher, compositor, reporter and "devil"—should I say "Deviless"?—of a small country weekly for about seven years during my girlhood days, I feel that I have had enough adventure in the way of meeting bills, collecting deliquent subscriptions and placating irate subscribers to entitle me to a seat at the Camp-Fire and a voice in regard to what I like and dislike in the make up of our magazine. Perhaps I am over presumptuous in anticipating woman's suffrage before its final adoption and casting a vote with all the "trimmin's" of an explanation at this time, but feel that my complaint is a just one and my grievance a justifying one.

I would like to have an opinion of other fair-minded readers of your magazine on this subject but shall insist on my feminine prerogative of "having the last word."

Instead of being afraid to sign my name to this little lecture I am proud to do so and respectfully subscribe myself—AURELIA TRUJILLO.

HERE'S an amusing picture of Wild Bill, Buffalo Bill and their cowboys and Indians:

Huntingdon, Pa.

Here is a little side-light on Wild Bill, Buffalo Bill and the crowd of "actors" who filled old Doolittle Hall, at Oswego, N. Y., with gun-smoke and dead Indians on that famous Eastern trip.

Some practical jokers invited the whole outfit to take a boat-ride on Lake Ontario. As a kid I stood on the west pier and saw them returning from an hour of bucking a good-sized sea on the old tug *Maria Melvin* and, believe me, the whole bunch of heroes didn't look the part and I reckon none of them felt it. You could not knock the heads off those white-caps with a six-shooter.—E. E. C. GIBBS.

THE bearers of our identification-cards naturally wander pretty well all over the earth and it would take many pages to recount the adventures all those bearers have gone through—to recount even the cases in which they write in for this reason or for that and incidentally report on their wanderings. But here are a sample few, most of which are rather the adventures of the cards themselves:

Washington, D. C.

Some time in 1914 I sent for an identification card, which I carried until the second day of the Argonne drive last September, when a piece of shrapnel destroyed it. Yes, had it in my blouse! But what I wanted to say, was: I would like to have another

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card, and the old number destroyed. I am sure that it was fifteen hundred and something. I think fifteen-forty-one. The old card saw some service before it went west, from Mexico to Flanders, and then some.—ALBERT R. FRANCIS.

Pensacola, Florida.

Enclosed you will please find twenty-five cents in stamps, for your identification card in aluminum. I have carried your paper identification card for some four years, which same was sent to the bottom by a Hun U-boat. I do not remember the number, but there is not much chance of any false alarms from that card.—CHARLES ALEXANDER MORINE.

Philadelphia.

I have carried one for some time and during the war was holding card number 7882 (pasteboard).

That little piece of cardboard left the States with me on board the S. S. *Cedric*, November 11, 1917, and landed in Liverpool, England, December 1, '17. Was with me through the training period in France. Entered the trenches "northeast of Toul," to be more exact, the Luneville Sector, February 25, 1918. Left there with me March 21, 1918, and then did a hundred and ten day hitch in the Baccarat Sector. I was carrying it in my left-hand breast pocket on the memorable day of July 14, 1918, when the Dutch made their push east of Rheims toward Chalons-sur-Marne and Paris. It accompanied me at historical Château-Thierry, St. Mihiel, and the Argonne-Meuse, then into Germany where I received card number 10866 (metal), but nevertheless it is still with me and lies in front of me as I write. Its blue surface is turning to yellow, but, believe me, it has always been a good pal and I intend to keep it the rest of my life.—W. A. FULMER.

League Island Navy Yard,
Philadelphia, Pa.

I noticed in my last *Adventure* how one of the cards had traveled in France, etc. I have held one since 1915 which has been over nearly all of the U. S. and since March, 1917, has been on a U. S. submarine along the entire coast of U. S., and a few other places—one dive of 200 feet—and been submerged something over 200 times.

I think they could tell some stories now if some aviator has held one, I guess there aren't many places they haven't been.—J. H. DUNLAP.

The next letter *is* from an aviator, but its adventure is of a different sort.

DuBuque, Iowa.

You recall mailing me a metal card to my New York address November last? It was the means of finding trace of me by an honest gentleman, Mr. C. W. Simonds, of Woodward, Oklahoma.

New York City to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, I lost a wallet containing the card and three fifty-dollar bills. Mr. Simonds found the wallet containing the money and card. By means of the card he located me and returned the money

My faith in the card and human nature went above par as a result and is still "soaring."—J. W. MCGRATH.

SO FAR as I can remember, this comrade is right—we've never had a single word concerning Liberia at our Camp-Fire, unless it was some incidental mention by Thomas Samson Miller. Well, here it comes at last, and a pigmy elephant to come later:

Humboldt, Sask., Canada.

Although I am a reader for the last two years and although I think that I have seen quite a bit of the world, at least enough to be eligible for Camp-Fire, I had practically made up my mind not to get out of my seclusion, before I would read once about Liberia, or hear through Camp-Fire from one who also "served his term" at the "Pepper Coast."

ONLY once was I tempted to write to you, and that was when a doctor, whose name and address I mislaid in the meantime enquired about the best hunting grounds in West Africa. Do I know them? I should say I do. No game license, no bag limit, no impertinent officials, at least not in the interior, and, oh boy, game! Say, none of the colonies on the West Coast at their best had more game than the "Land of the Lonesome Star." Do you know where the latest discovery amongst the large animals was made, the pigmy hippopotamus? Liberia! Do you know where there is still a discovery due? The pigmy elephant? Guess! I have seen them but I did not have the time and means to bring proofs of their existence, except tusks, all my photos being anchored at the bottom of the Messurado River within two miles of Monrovia through the capsizing of our canoe returning from a seventeen months' ivory hunt.

OH, YES, there is a manuscript lying in my bureau drawer for the last two years, covering our trip, but I am afraid, after the last long *Monty* story, it would seem too much like plagiarism although Tippoo Tib's ivory hoard exists only in fiction and the ivory we were hunting for existed and—we found it. Maybe I will tell you some time about it.

But if ever anybody wants to know something about Liberia, the land of unlimited possibilties, or better, limited impossibilties, send him to me. I will satisfy his thirst of knowledge.—WALTER PETERSON, Box 395, Humboldt, Sask., Canada.

THIS comrade echoes the sentiments of many others when he says it was good to sit in once more at our Camp-Fire after the Great War. Our magazine followed the boys to France as much as it could, even sent a special representative over there to further its distribution, but it was impossible to get it where wanted until the armistice was signed.

Comrade —— may not be what some think of when they say "old-timer" but any man who has given two legs to his country and takes the loss with the spirit this comrade shows will, I know, always have a seat kept for him at our Camp-Fire. And I guess most of us will see to it that the seat is up in the first row.

New York.

To start with, I've been reading the *Adventure* a

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good many years now, and am still going strong. I started as a kid. (Here's hoping I remain one for a long while to come.) Have enjoyed it to the sweetest end (The Camp-Fire).

I'm not "aimin'" to break out among the "Old Timers" and try to horn in on their arguments, but I've sure got to sit down and let you folks know how good I feel to be able to be back in the fire-light and listen in on the subjects that are dear to the hearts of men—the great outdoors, romance and adventure.

MAYBE a little of my history will interest you, but compared with the "regulars" it will seem a bit tame. But here goes:

Was twenty-nine years of age last February. Have seen some of the world and in my rambles and picked up some of the lingo of different ports. Am a pretty fair shot, as "shooting" goes.

Was in San Diego, California, 1916, when I thought I had better get into the "Big Red Glow." In doing so I became one of the many John Smiths in the Canadian Ninety-seventh Battalion (American Legion). Managed to get transferred to the U. S. A. E. F. and at the Marne, when a bunch of Jerries tried to come in for a swim, I was hit by a Quick Dick, (one-pounder) during the festivities. Result—lost two perfectly good legs and gained some idea of how a war was carried on. Am out now, and roving around same as usual.

I almost forgot to tell you, Montana claims the honor of my birthplace.

I don't think it would be right to lots of fellows to publish this epistle, for they may have more important things that would interest your readers (may the tribe increase) than this little tale of wo.— —— ——.

LOOKING AHEAD FOR DEMOCRACY

IN WESTERN Australia there has been started a very interesting movement for fuller democracy, a tiny movement as yet, but well aimed. Mr. Colin Unwin, the leading spirit in the work, was much interested in the citizens' "Creed" that appeared in this department, sent me the outline of his Federation and has, I believe, used certain points from the "Creed" in furthering his own work, though he had mapped out his own course before he heard of the somewhat similar program laid out in this department. In emphasis on individual responsibility and in advocating minority representation the two plans cover important ground in common.

THE DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA (Fremantle Branch)—First Annual Report and Outline of the Purposes of the Non-Party Movement. (Adopted April 24, 1919.)—Men and Women are urgently invited to work for Democracy by assisting this Educative Organization personally and financially.—"Our system of government has broken down because it is based upon 'party' warfare. Cooperative government must be established at the earliest possible moment, and a concrete policy of development taken in hand to provide employment for the returning men and others."

ALTHOUGH during the first year of the educative campaign of the Federation we have had to face the extreme apathy of the people in regard to matters political, we believe that our efforts are slowly bearing fruit. Although but one hundred and twenty paid-up members are on the register, signs are not wanting that many citizens are in sympathy with our aims. From a financial standpoint we are not strong, but we believe that ample funds will be available as people realize that the pathway of cooperation outlined by the Federation is the only one leading to ultimate industrial peace and social contentment.

We are confronted with one outstanding problem, which has an intensely practical as well as an ideal character. The practical task to be undertaken is that of finding suitable and decently remunerative employment for all men and women. The ideal task is that of bringing into the range of practical politics and industry that "democratic order of society" for which so much blood has been poured out and so much misery endured during the great war.

THREE preliminary things are necessary for the accomplishment of this purpose:

(*a*) The recognition by each citizen of personal responsibility to cultivate, as far as in his power lies, the spirit of true democracy, *i. e.*, the spirit of

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co-operation throughout every sphere of human activity.

(*b*) The saving grace of common sense.

(*c*) The utilization of the best scientific and political knowledge.

The Federation in its rôle of mediator, as it were, between the conflicting sections of society, has therefore contrived a Constitution which, step by step, aims at the elimination of the system of "party politics" so that personal responsibility, common sense and science may be freer to serve the general interest.

THE party system is based upon the discredited principle that "might is right." Surely, after such an attempt to disprove this fallacy so far as Germany is concerned, it is only logical to apply reform to our own political institutions. For the present systems of election and government in Australia are really anti-democratic, since they result in majorities dominating even very large minorities. The practical application of the idea that "majorities must rule" has seemingly developed a fatal flaw in our system of government. Majority rule at a board of directors, for example, is workable because all the directors have the welfare of the common concern at heart. Differences of opinion are put forward in good faith. Their primary function, of course, is to find a qualified executive officer and, having found him, to trust him. It is therefore necessary to regard the welfare of the whole of the people as a huge and important undertaking, which must be placed under the control of a representative cooperative government, who will delegate responsibility to a Board of Business Directors. This demands that the "party system" of government give place to a "non-party system," and thus the Federation stresses the fourth plank of its Constitution:

"To secure the application of the principle of Proportional Representation to the election of Members of Parliament and to the Ministry."

THIS is the logical manner in which to secure the practical application of what hitherto has been a platitude, *i. e.*, "Government of all the People, by all the People, for all the People." In the maze of party machinery, individuals become hopelessly enmeshed, and thus are not able to place at the service of the nation that full measure of personal power and individuality which should be the only justification for election. Proportional Representation would save both politician and people from domination by irresponsible cliques. Considerable freedom of choice would be afforded to the elector, and any reasonably large body of public opinion in favor of the particular reform would be able to secure direct representation. This would mean a truly democratic form of election, for every vote would have an equal value, as against the present system which means that tremendous bodies of electors are condemned to vote uselessly. Under Proportional Representation it would be found, for example, that ultimately the labor unionist would be fully represented by politicians elected in company with other men representative of different sections of public opinion.

With a system of Elective Ministries also operating, instead of having parliaments at one time under the control of a labor machine, and at another time under the control of servants of the large commercial concerns, we should really have a "people's government" in continuous operation, renewable, say, every three years.

The policy of such a government must be, in the words of our Constitution, "To produce conditions under which it shall be more difficult for the very rich to become so very rich, and easier for the man without capital to lead a life of self-respecting and hard-working well-being."

REFUSING to admit that the method of brute force under one guise or another is the only way in which to remold society, this branch has paid particular attention to Clause 6 of the Constitution:

"To coordinate the plans of all schools of Social Reform into such a policy as will permit common action."

For it should be immediately obvious that a cooperative government based on Elective Ministries could hardly be successful without a cooperative policy, on the same principle that up-to-date cities control and direct their expansion in accordance with clearly defined town-planning schemes. Under the present party system it is impossible to lay down a definite progressive policy of development, because conflicting party platforms form the basis of experiments, according to the party in office. Upon the development of the primary and secondary industries depends the employment and happiness of the people. Unemployment, as we now know, is a dangerous menace, so that it is imperative that industry shall be freed from the uncertainty of "party politics" and other evil influences which bring stagnation.

In December last, therefore, this Branch issued a Public Manifesto *re* Peace Problems, calling attention to the words of President Wilson that there is "No general scheme of Reconstruction which is likely to force our spirited business men and self-reliant laborers to accept it with due pliancy and obedience." The Manifesto accordingly laid open for discussion certain "Principles of a Proposed Plan for Democratic Reconstruction," which places the Federation in the position of being able to suggest a policy of mediation between the various contending parties of the present time. For sooner or later the absolute necessity for cooperation will be forced upon them, and the Federation is attempting to be ready with concrete practical proposals for the occasion.

Since Repatriation really involves the placing of large bodies of individuals in useful employment, the Federation has constantly urged the adoption of some comprehensive scheme of National Reconstruction along the lines suggested in order to find work for everybody.

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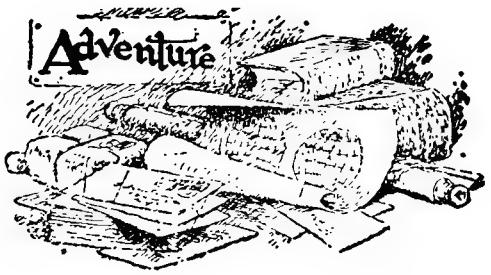

VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

THESE services of *Adventure* are free to *any one.* They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules,* thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Dutch, Portuguese, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure,* New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no ther obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you, *post-paid,* the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

WILL BUY: Mid-Feb., First March, Mid-March, First June, Mid-June, First July, First Aug., Mid-Aug.—all 1919. State price, plus postage. FRANCIS BAER, 1834 Columbia Road, Washington, D. C.

WILL SELL: Mid-April to Mid-July, 1919, inclusive. Five cents each, post-paid.—FRED E. WILKINS, Cherry St., Danvers, Mass.

WILL BUY: Aug., 1913.—E. EHWEGEN, Keenbrook, Calif.

The Boston Magazine Exchange, 109 *Mountfort St., Boston, Mass., can supply* Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.*

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied. Unclaimed mail which we have held for a long period is listed on the last page of this issue.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn in lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 1833 S St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—An organization promoting a democratic system of military training in American high schools. Address *Everybody's,* Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. ★ Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
BERIAH BROWN, Seattle Press Club, 1309 Fifth Ave., N. E., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs; and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, 6 W. Concord Ave., Orlando, Florida. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Middle Western U. S. Part 1
CAPT.-ADJ. JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care *Adventure*. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially* early history of Missouri Valley.

8. Middle Western U. S. Part 2
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9. Western U. S. Part 1
E.E.HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

10. Western U. S. Part 2 and Mexico Part 1
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11. Mexico Part 2 Southern
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12. North American Snow Countries Part 1
R. S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Minnesota and Wisconsin. Hunting, fishing, trapping; canoes and snowshoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

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13. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 2
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 3
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., covering south-eastern Ontario and the lower Ottawa Valley. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping.

15. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 4
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering Southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

16. North American Snow Countries Part 5
ED. L. CARSON, Burlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

17. North American Snow Countries Part 6
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

18. North American Snow Countries. Part 7
H. S. BELCHER, The Hudson's Bay Company, Ft. Alexander, Manitoba, Canada. Covering Manitoba, Saskatchewan, MacKenzie and Northern Keewatin. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel.

19. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 632 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

20. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and MacDougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

21. South America. Part 1
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and MacDougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

22. South America. Part 2
P. H. GOLDSMITH, *Inter-American Magazine*, 407 West 117th St., New York, N. Y. Covering Venezuela, The Guianas, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentine Republic. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, natives, languages, hunting and fishing.

23. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

24. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNER, Box 807A.—R. F. D. No. 10, Los Angeles, California. Covering history, natives, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, exports and imports; manufacturing.

25. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Maine. Covering Japan: Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

26. Russia and Eastern Siberia
MAJOR A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A.; Ret.), Austin, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalien; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

27. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Eagle Bird Mine, Washington, Nevada Co., Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

28. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

29. ★ Africa Part 3 Portuguese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

30. ★ Africa Part 4 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo.
CHARLES BEADLE, 7 Place de Tertre, Paris. XVIII, France. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, mining, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

31. ★ New Zealand and the South Sea Islands
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

32. Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, Hotel Sydney, Sydney, Australia. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

FIREARMS, PAST AND PRESENT

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers and ammunition. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district in question.)

A.—All Shotguns (including foreign and American makes). J. B. THOMPSON, Box 1374, St. Louis, Mo.

B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers (including foreign and American makes). D. WIGGINS, Salem, Ore.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. THOMPSON, Box 1374, St. Louis, Mo. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; live bait; camping outfits.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agrl., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen. Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

FOR ARMY, NAVY OR MARINE CORPS

What the Government is doing for discharged soldiers and sailors. Facts not opinions given. No questions answered involving criticism or bestowing praise or blame. Enclose stamped addressed envelope. Address—SERVICE, THE HOME SECTOR, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City, New York.

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The following "Ask Adventure" editors are now serving in our military forces. We hope you will be patient if their answers are at times delayed: Capt.-Adj. Joseph Mills Hanson; Major A. M. Lochwitsky.

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Canoe Trip Down the Kennebec

REAL downright canoe enthusiasts are already planning next season's trips, as they dream over, again, the cruises they took last Summer. Therefore, we print this informative bit of advice about rivers of Maine:

Question:—"In our mutual friend *Adventure* I saw your service notice regarding canoe trips in Maine.

Possibly it would be better if I should introduce myself along canoeing lines so that you will readily see that I am an adherent of the sport which, in your State, I understand, is a passion.

Have canoed in Cuba, Haiti, Santo Domingo, Jamaica, and West Coast Mexico, as well as coast ports of Atlantic seaboard, but have wanted for years to come down the Kennebec River, as I have had but one experience in that locality, and that is coursing from mouth to source and return on Piscataqua River in Maine and New Hampshire. These trips have always been in company of a good canoe partner (you know how hard it is to find one), but this time I want to take my sister from the headwaters of Kennebec down to near the mouth.

I am making up a party of two girls, a boy friend of mine, and myself. We should use two light, sturdy craft, but are going to try, if possible, to get along with as little camp equipment as possible, preferring to stop at night at a settlement, farmhouse, or hotel, as the nature of the country permits.

Now for the big question. Would it be possible to arrange to hire the canoes at the source of the river and ship by freight upon conclusion of trip? That is, can we obtain the good-will of somebody (backed by a good cash deposit) to loan us two canoes? Also I would deeply appreciate your kind instructions as to quantity of camp equipment, clothes, etc., that might be necessary. We do not intend to hunt, as we have but ten days to make the trip and would like the expenses to be as small as is compatible with class of canoes, equipment, etc."—JOHN GIBBONS, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Answer, by Dr. Hathorne:—I think it possible you might arrange to hire canoes at the point of departure for a canoe trip down the Kennebec. I hardly think it possible for you to make the trip you contemplate, in the length of time you have at your command. You might start in at Bingham on the line of the Maine Central Railroad and canoe from there down to the mouth of the river.

I hardly know what to advise in the way of equipment, as most of the time you are in a well-settled country and would be able to secure food and lodging along the river. If you intend to camp you would need two tents, with bedding and cooking outfit. Your supplies you could easily secure from the farmers and settlements along the river. But I never was keen on camping so near civilization.

You could make a "real trip" in ten days time by going to N. E. Carry at the head of Moosehead Lake, then down the West Branch to Norcross, on the B. & A. R. R. Of course this would make a guide necessary, as you would be camping on wild land.

You might write to the Postmaster at the Forks, Me., or Indian Pond, and they might be able to help you out as to hiring a canoe.

If you had asked me about some canoe trip in Maine's wilderness I could have given you more definite information.

The Battas of Sumatra

IT IS this brown savage race of islanders which taught the world to dye "batik cloth." Even though they are said to eat relatives, they are remarkable in many ways. They have a postal system, an extensive literature, and make wonderful pottery. The Battas are at once one of the highest and lowest races in all the South Seas:

Question:—"I am in quest of some information concerning Sumatra.

Can you tell me anything of the people known in 1860 as the Battas? They inhabited that part of Sumatra between the equator and N. Lat. 2 degrees, 30 minutes, were cannibals, but had a well developed sense of the responsibilities of hospitality, and were supposed to eat only their infirm relatives, making a ceremony of it as a religious service.

They had an alphabet, a method of time recording, and a set of figures for the signs of the zodiac, which were all their own; and they spoke a Malay-Polynesian tongue of their own.

Can you tell me something up to date about these people? Are their language, alphabet, religion, civilization the same as in 1860? And are they still cannibals, as far as their relatives are concerned?

By the way, I note they were greatly addicted to cock fighting. How about that?"—H. S. MORRISON, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. McCreagh:—Can I tell you anything about the Battas? Some order! They are quite the most interesting of the Sumatran tribes, and "anything about them" might be spread through several books. But you seem to have read up on them quite a lot. I'll tell you, however, what I know from personal observation.

At the present time they have been to a large extent taken in hand by the Dutch Government; but there are still some independent groups—the Timor Battas, the Pakpak Battas, and the Karo Battas. Even these, however, are being absorbed into the Achin and Malay populations which surround them.

Their alphabet and language you seem to know about. It is interesting to note that they have quite an extensive literature, dealing mostly with witchcraft and incantations, and the queerest forms of riddles. Most of them have a working knowledge of reading their own language. They have a primitive postal system, too. Letters may be "mailed" in hollow trees at road crossings. Any passer-by, then, who may be going in the direction of the address, may take the letter along and deliver it,

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receiving payment from the addressee. Since payment is of more value than mere writing on paper, the letters are usually delivered. I have never heard of a money-order system, though.

An astonishing thing about them is the fact that, while so advanced in so many respects, they are primitive animals in so many others. Their dress, for instance, consists of the raggedest, filthiest rags; and they don't wash more than they have to; and they eat anything at all, irrespective of how it died.

Yet, on the other hand, they are highly advanced in the arts of pottery making and iron work, and weaving and dyeing. The Batta krisses are very much prized on account of their excellent steel and the carving of their hilts. An interesting point about their dyeing is the recent introduction of the system into this country. Their peculiar method of dyeing cottons was called after their own name, or rather after the Dutch variation of it. "Battaks" the Dutch call them, and their cloth is known as Battak cloth. From them the system spread into Java, where it was rather improved upon; and from there it came to Europe, and thence here, under the name of "batik." And many soulfully artistic persons in Greenwich Village contrive to get amazing prices from the uninitiated esthetes of New York for their "beautiful batik gowns."

Regarding cannibalism. It is true that they are still cannibalistically inclined. But not to the extent that they are supposed to have been. I have talked to Timor Battas who deny indignantly that they eat human flesh; yet they admit that their forebears used to do so in times of famine. Theirs was a cannibalism of necessity, they say, and not of religious ceremony. They refuse to admit of eating grandpop and the spinster aunts; but they maintain with scorn that the Toba Lake Battas used to do this, as the easiest means of getting rid of the old folks who were no longer productive and had become a hindrance to the tribe. Furthermore, it was a most respectful way of disposing of one's folks and carried with it the advantage of conferring upon the eaters all the good qualities of the eaten. I never heard of a mother-in-law being eaten.

There is a whole lot of talk about these Battas' hideous cannibal tendencies; but I can't say that I have any personal evidence about it. I don't know the Toba Lake folk; and it may be that they are very much worse than the others. But as far as my experience of the Timors and Karos goes I should say that cannibalism was pretty well abolished.

I have an idea that most of these know-it-all sea-faring men who came back with hair-raising stories of the cannibal orgies which they have witnessed are getting mixed up in the stories they have heard about just Battas. And remember that there is a tribe of Battas in the Lake Chad district of Africa who have a very unsavory reputation. All this eating of auntie and Uncle James fits in much better with the Central African character than with the Sumatran Battas.

Regarding cock-fighting. Sure they cock-fight. But that is a sport by no means confined to the Battas. It is a favorite form of entertainment throughout the Malayan Islands and Burma.

Once I won everything that a man possessed over a cock-fight, including his house and his wife and daughters. But I lost it all again. Later I saw the outfit. It accounted for his readiness to bet. I think he was sorry his bird won.

To Become a Revolver Shot

SINCE the war, an added impetus has been given to the fine art of pistol markmanship. There are many, not fortunate enough to get into the service, who are anxious to learn how to shoot and shoot straight. Here's the way to begin:

Question:—"Noting that you have charge of the new 'Gun Department' in 'Ask Adventure,' I take this advantage in asking you if you would be so kind as to give me a few pointers in regard to becoming at least a fair shot with a revolver.

"First, what sort of a target? I am a rank amateur. I have a Colt .22 caliber target revolver, but I do not wish to confine myself to any caliber; that is, I should like to be able to handle most any caliber with more or less skill. Second, what would you consider as a good assortment of guns to practise with?"—HARRY F. LEEDS, Philadelphia, Pa.

Answer, by Mr. Wiggins:—I am glad to see that you have the idea of learning to shoot the revolver, and that you have approached the matter from the right place: most people in trying to learn the use of the revolver and pistol make the rather natural mistake of trying to master the heavier caliber arms without preliminary practise with the .22.

Now as to targets: I am enclosing the outline of the Standard 20-yard indoor target, which I have made from a template of tin, made from a regular target. Stick a small awl through a bit of tin, like the small drawing, and, putting a pencil through the different holes, draw your circles; then you will have the target absolutely accurate for size. Use cardboard for the targets.

The 8, 9 and 10 rings are blackened to form the bullseye, and I use this outdoors for up to fifty yards; I never get very high scores, but it will do very well for all ranges you will shoot at first. Or I think the Remington U. M. C. Company, in the Woolworth Building, New York, will gladly send you some targets for the various distances.

Having disposed of the targets, we will consider the revolvers. I think you will do well to stick to the Colt .22 till you are able to do good work at fifty yards with it, then you might take up the .38 special cartridge in either a Colt or a Smith & Wesson. When proficient with the latter, try out a .45. But don't try the largest guns till you are used to the recoil and report of the smaller sizes.

In shooting, hold the hand up on the grip as far as possible, and run the forefinger well through the trigger-guard. I get mine through till the trigger lies in the middle joint of my finger. Run the thumb well up on the opposite side of the frame. This will tend to prevent a shot to the opposite side from the hand gripping the gun.

Don't jerk the trigger. Squeeze the hand together as if you held an orange and were trying to crush it. But don't grip the handle too hard, as this will cause you to flinch. And don't wink as the gun goes off. Try to keep your eyes lined on the sights as before the report, trying to tell

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just where the sights were alined for at the moment of discharge. We call this "calling the shot," and a good marksman can tell where the bullet hit before any one else can announce it.

Stand squarely on the feet, with the weight evenly balanced, and the body facing quarteringly toward the target. Keep the arm stiff, is the advice of experts, but I have better success with a slight bend in the elbow. It seems to take up some of the recoil, which in my .44 is sometimes rather stout.

Draw the front sight well down into the notch of the rear sight, and keep the front tip just under the black of the bull, so that there is a fine white line between them. Don't try to hold in the black, as it is apt to cause variation on the target, due to improper definition of the sight. A good gold or ivory bead is a great help to beginners. Personally I use copper beads on all my guns. You can smoke them with a match if they glisten too much for you.

Never shoot till you are sure you have the gun well lined up, and don't shoot too much at a time, thus becoming nervous. Ten shots a day are better than a couple of hundred a week. Shoot all in an hour or two. Don't waste shells when you feel tired or nervous, either.

After you have become fairly proficient on the regular work, try snap-shooting, both at still targets and moving ones. A five-gallon oil can hung on a wire at twenty yards is a good thing to begin on. A revolver can be swung on a mark so quickly that it is a deadly tool for speedy work—more so at short range than a rifle. I have hit a tomato can tossed in the air six times before it hit the ground, pulling my Colt after I threw the can, But that was before a careless orderly in the army crippled my arm; I will never be a good shot again. I fear. Got the typhoid shot in the great nerve canal in the right arm, and, as the record of the inoculation was lost, and the discharge they gave me says I never took it, I have no come-back for the hurt I sustained. But it doesn't matter. I am alive, and that's something.

The various fancy shots, such as pulling and firing from the hip, and the roll, will come with time. When you get pretty well along with the above shooting write me again and I will tell you some more stunts to try.

One pretty good way to find out what you can do in the line of good work is to let a friend load your gun, putting in some loaded and some empty shells—you don't know what you will draw, a shot or a snap. This will test the nerves and holding of the best shot living.

Clean your revolvers with good nitro-solvent oil, and never let them rust. If you use a bristle brush on the twisted wire rod that comes with the better revolvers, wind the rod with string from handle to brush, so no metal will ever touch the muzzle, or the cylinder, thus preventing wear.

A good plan is to wind the stocks with tape. This will help you to hold, with sweaty or greasy hands from handling ammunition.

Never try to shoot with the revolver held in both hands.

If you get the automatic craze later, the above hints will do for that type of arm also. But don't expect equal accuracy from them; they are for defense at close range, and not up to the revolver even then, I judge from what I have heard in regard to their use.

Lastly, get some good books and read what the real masters have to say. I recommend the books furnished by *Outing Magazine*, of New York. And read *Outdoor Life*, published in Denver, Col. Some of the greatest shots living to-day write for that publication.

I am aware that this is a rather mixed up letter, but you see I write as the ideas come; I have never arranged anything on this line in a set form. Every man will work out little helps for himself that only he will find; you will evolve something or other when you get started, I am sure.

Employment in Latin America

THIS is a broad survey of the best companies employing Americans in South and Central America. If you want to see our neighboring Republics, and work your way as you go, Mr. Young gives you some valuable information on how the thing can be done:

Question:—"Three Princeton students are contemplating a trip through Central and South America.

"Can you tell me something about the opportunities for jobs, inasmuch as we have decided that it will be better to work our way from place to place, trusing to chance and our own wits, instead of travelling in the usual way?

"We have had a fair education."—W. F. CONNOLLY, Princeton, N. J.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—Possibly the easiest way to get to Central America from here is to sign up with the United Fruit Company (17 Battery Place) and get transportation down. They are partial to young college men (no joke), for they think they are full of "ambish" and will work hard for a time after being shot full of the work-and-win stuff which usually forms part of the bunk handed out in modern colleges (domestication and getting fit for a work beast existence). The Panama Railroad is better and pays better. The Panama Canal, Washington, D. C., treats a man like a man and is the best outfit to work for. They employ on the ground with a three months' temporary job which usually turns out to be permanent.

The United Fruit has various plantations in Guatemala, near Puerto Barrios; they own all the railroads in this country, principally the two running from coast to coast, Puerto Barrios to Guatemala City, and Guatemala City to San Jose, Gauatemala. They pay about a hundred dollars gold per month for American conductors and engineers, which is equal in purchasing power to about five hundred here, for things are cheap down there. They have 29,787 acres under cultivation and 114,444 unimproved in this country. They have about 18,000 acres under cultivation near Puerto Cortes, Honduras, besides much unimproved land.

Besides them there are the Vaccaro Bros., who are cultivating considerable and run their own steamers from New Orleans. Near Port Limon, Costa Rica, they have vast operations. It is about

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five miles down the coast to the beginning of their plantations, at Bananito River. They also own the railroad from Limon up to the capital and employ some white men on it. They are good for a job sometimes when a man drifts in as foreman, banana checker, timekeeper, storekeeper, etc. Some of their officials down there are pretty small kind of people, possibly due to the fact that they deal quite a bit with negro labor and don't know how to treat a white man. A good many of their office help and smaller officials come from Vermont and New Hampshire and do not stack up very high as regards good fellowship. Not like that noble bunch at Cerro de Pasco, Peru, for instance. The United Fruit also has big operations in the Changuenola Valley, up-country from Cedar Creek, twelve miles by launch from Bocas del Toro, Panama.

On the west side of Honduras is the big Rosario mine at San Juancito, twenty miles from Tegucigalpa. Amapala is the port and a regular stop for the Pacific Mail boats from Frisco. This is a good outfit. They employ several hundred Americans as foremen, machinists, engineers, etc. A man blowing in is usually good for a job with them.

On the west side of Nicaragua is the railroad that runs up from Corinto to Granada, through Managua, which is operated by J. C. White & Co., Exchange Place, New York. They have an American general manager, named Thomas O'Connell, located in Managua. Their chief dispatcher is a good friend of mine named Jimmy Gaylord. He is located at Masaya. I was general auditor, contador fiscal, and disburser of this road in 1912. There are several Australian, New Zealand and English operated mines near the road on the way up, the principal one being the Leona mine near Leon.

Not much doing on the west side from there to Balboa, which is the other end of the Panama Canal. The next jump south from Balboa for a Typical Tropical Tramp is the Guayaquil & Quito Railroad at Duran, across the river from Guayaquil, Ecuador. Guayaquil (and Duran) is known to be the unhealthiest spot in the universe. They have scourges of yellow jack, bubonic, etc., that kill twenty or thirty thousand every now and then. I saw them die like rabbits in 1911. No man with negro blood can have yellow jack, consequently most of the immunes around Guayaquil are a little dingy. The bubonic very seldom tackles a pure white man and this is where the natives get theirs.

The headquarters of this road are at Huigra, a few hours up the mountain. After getting away from the swamps the climate is ideal all the way to Quito. It is a wonderful trip and a wonderful country from Huigra to Quito. The road climbs right up the side of the Andes and switches back over the bridge of Devil's Nose and finally reaches the high fertile valley of volcanic ash which is farmed in checkerboard squares of about half an acre each for the big farmers by picturesque peons who plant different kinds of crops as the spirit moves them. These farms extend almost up to the snow line on the sides of Chimborazo and Cotopaxi and give the country a very striking effect. Cotopaxi is always in mild eruption and is very beautiful at night. Civilization along this road has advanced almost as far as ancient Israel in Bible times.

The next stop is Cerro de Pasco, Peru, via Callao and Lima. They have a New York office at 15 Broad Street. Their Lima office is located in the Sun Life Building on Calle Union. Their operations are a day's journey by rail from Lima, going via Peru Central to Arroya, which is the junction with their own railroad. The Peru Central has 13 switchbacks, 67 tunnels, and for 140 miles is solid 4 per cent. grade. It leaves from sea level in the morning at six o'clock and by 2:30 P.M. has you up to an altitude of 15,865 feet at Ticlio, where the road pierces the Andes. It then descends to Arroya, about 12,000 feet. The Cerro de Pasco road ascends to Cerro from there, which is about 14 400. This trip is worth walking all the way. Aside from seasickness from the altitude, which one gets used to in a few days, and the rapid change from tropical warmth to Winter weather, there is small discomfort. Here is the ancient country of the Incas, a terraced country for farming right up to the tops of the mountains, remains of old Inca gold mills and smelter, llamas, and a dirty, picturesque race.

The Guggenheims have operations at several places in Chili, the largest being at Chuchicamata and Rancagua. The Cerro de Pasco people are better, but the Guggenheims are not bad to work for. The Guggenheim Exploration Company is at 120 Broadway, New York. They sometimes furnish free transportation down here; also there is Wessel, Duval & Co. Their agents are located at Valparaiso, on Calle Cochrane. Rancagua is up-country out on a branch from the main transcontinental line to Argentina.

Duncan Fox & Co., who have offices here in New York, are also interested in mining and ranching in Peru and Chili. They import quite a bit of cheap Scotch and English labor for their good jobs and are not considered the best to work for.

There are several small mining operations going on at or near Punta Arenas, Chili. Gallegos is about the best one near there.

Over in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Agar, Cross & Co., 28 Calle Defensa, hire thrashing-machine engineers and pay as much as three hundred dollars per week, U. S. gold, and commission of ten cents per hundred on all thrashed. Most of the jobs are away up in the Chaco country, and only last a month, and a man must know his business before he can handle one of their high-powered oil-motor thrashers which they sell the big Jew farmers there. They employ quite a number of Englishmen in their offices in South America and paid me eight dollars, Argentine money, per day, payable every night, for the boss was an American and said he thought I wouldn't stay. The average pay is around $100 to $150, American gold. Living is very high in Buenos Aires.

Rio! Roll me down to Rio! This is some burg. I thought I was dreaming one foggy morning when I landed in the bay there on a Russian freighter from Barbados and saw the fog lift from over the city.

The best outfit is the Rio de Janeiro Light and Power Company, Ltd., who have their head offices in Toronto, Canada. They pay a white man anything from $200 up. They employ a great number of Canadians, Americans, English and Scotch. They own the light, power, gas, street cars, telephones and cables down there. They have a big hydro-electric plant at Rio dos Lages, near Belem,

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out a few miles from Rio. The same company also owns the Sao Paulo light and power and telephone plants. Also the Southern Brazil Lumber Company, one of the largest lumber outfits in the world, with millions of acres of virgin timber in the States of Parana and Santa Caterina, is owned by the same money. Their (South Brazil Lumber Company) New York offices are located at 25 Broad Street, and the Brazil offices at Curytiba, Parana, and one of the biggest mills at Tres Barros, on the Rio Negro. Sao Paulo is 480 miles from Rio by a good railroad. Santos is the nearest port. Many coffee people have headquarters in Santos, including our friend Arbuckle.

The Amazon country is a good place to stay away from, but the Madera Mamore Railway has a head office at 25 Broad Street. This road is owned by the same money that owns the Rio Light and Power (Farquhar) and pays well. They are up country from Manaos, with headquarters at Porto Velho, British Guiana, which is not very good at the best, is sometimes good for a job with one of the big sugar plantations. The best outfit in that neighborhood is the Barber Asphalt Company, which has operations in Trinidad and in Venezuela. Perhaps you have heard of their asphalt lakes down there. They treat their white employees well and have a good reputation with all who have worked for them.

Mexico is pretty well shot to pieces, but I am in touch with several Americans down there at present, including two of my personal friends, one of whom is engaged in the unique business of catching sharks, boiling the oil out of them, and working up the remainder into fertilizer.

Alaska for Gold

WHY should any one think the mining game is on the decline in our great northern territory? More gold is being taken out now, perhaps, than ever before. As for wages. A strong man has no trouble in earning a neat sum for himself in that land of great opportunity:

Question:—"I am writing to you for information regarding Alaska. Is there any mining still going on? Is there still any prospecting? Is there any work for a young man?

Are there still any gold strikes being made in Alaska? Are there any saloons and gambling dens in the more remote parts of Alaska?

Do you think a fellow could earn his living out there now? What way would be the cheapest to get near the gold-bearing ground? What are the wages paid on different kinds of work? I would like to go out there next Spring if I knew I'd make a living. Do you think I could?"—EMIL RITNER, South Oak Park, Illinois.

Answer, by Mr. Solomons:—There is just as much mining going on in Alaska as ever, and almost as much prospecting. Of course at the height of the Klondike excitement, and again at Nome, and still later at Fairbanks, there were large influxes of people and more prospecting and mining—if you call it mining—what the tenderfeet do to the ground. But, on an average of all the years, there is today as much mining activity, and the chances of the average man are just as good.

There is usually plenty of work for any man; naturally, younger men are more adaptable. There are gold strikes every six months or so, with important ones every few years.

Alaska is pretty near "dry" now, I guess, and gambling was prohibited long, long ago. You will find today little, if any, of the movie stuff in Alaska. It is a safe and sane country. You can earn your living there if you are not a cripple.

The cheapest way to placer ground would be from Seattle to any point in Southern Alaska—$40 or $50 is the fare. Wages are particularly good for common labor. Skilled labor is only a little better paid than in the States.

Take *no outfit*, and have a little money in your pocket for emergencies. Aim to keep it there and add to it if possible, so when good opportunities arise, and you are "wised up" to them by actual experience of conditions, you can use a little money to better yourself and have others work for you.

African Witchcraft

SUCH widespread interest in witchcraft, past and present, has been shown, that Charles Beadle, our expert on South and Central Africa, gives you the following:

The African savage, generally speaking, is in the same mental state of development that white races were thousands of years ago; and in many cases not by any means as long ago as that. The scars of these old superstitions we civilized people carry with us still in the form of many customs—morris dances, country proverbs, and ceremonies that were founded upon beliefs and practises every whit as repulsive to the cultured mind as the current practises of the inhabitants of the wildest parts of the Congo.

For instance, the impressive ceremony of presenting Marshal Foch with a golden laurel has come down undoubtedly from a custom of whipping a person with a sprig of the laurel practised today by the Bamanas of Senegambia, by the South American Indians, and by the ancient Greeks, and full a score or more of peoples. The idea then was an act of purification; that with these sacred leaves the evil spirits which were supposed to infest one were literally beaten off much as one uses a fly switch to chase mosquitoes.

The real import of the said presentation to the illustrious Generalissimo was in effect: We think so much of your services that our most eminent witch doctors (no reflection!) will publicly relieve you of any odd demons that may perchance be sitting, or about to sit, upon your honorable shoulders. Such an act was the highest and most beneficial honor and service that that type of mind could think of in those days when every stream, tree, rock, animal, the thunder and lightning, were swarming with malicious devils.

These examples illustrate, too, the process of thought in the black mind. Everything to them, as to a child, is literal, that is, concrete. Having no conception of the abstract, they argue thus with naive logic. Illustration: if one man gets some Bolshevik ideas in his woolly head, his black fellows give him a strong emetic, for, they say, if

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he gets out everything that is inside him those wicked ideas must come out, too!

These relics of our race childhood abound everywhere: a rabbit's foot as a mascot; seeing the new moon through glass; a black cat; spilling salt; a dog howling at night, which means the death of some one; the unlucky Friday to start any venture, etc., etc., etc. You laugh! Any of these catch you? Not one? Not even—well, avoiding a ladder? (I'm not going to take any fool chances!). Refusing to be the third to light a cigaret at the same match? Caught? Well, that's your remote ancestor mocking you! The custom of placing a gilded manuscript or any record under the first stone of a building dates back to a gentle habit of encarcerating anybody from an eminent individual to the prettiest young girl in the village, sometimes alive, sometimes efficiently slaughtered, in the foundation, for, as you may clearly see, the building will be made the stronger by having absorbed the soul of the victim. The good old custom of welcoming the New Year by drums, cans, hooters, whistles, etc., is practised today by the Chinese and the African savage just as we do; the difference is that we don't quite know why we do it, but they do; they are cleaning up the old year and determining to start a fresh one by chasing out all the numerous devils and demons, which are always pestering mankind, by making as much noise as possible, for, as every witch doctor will inform you, any self-respecting demon simply can not abide noise. I myself can not abide noise; ergo, am I a demon?

To the black mind, man is not the only one who has a soul. He throws water upon a fire and puts it out; therefore, as any reasonable person will see, some one must be pouring water out of the sky—ergo, it is the rain-god, obviously; if the river gets swollen in flood and destroys his gardens, again, obviously it is the spirit of the river. Who else could it be? Therefore any wise individual will seek to make friends with this powerful being who can do you harm. Appease him; you eat, therefore he must eat; give him choice food and drink. That does not appease him? Perhaps he wants slaves to wait upon him? Sacrifice a few. That is the process, and a process which has, of course, developed into innumerable stages and variations.

The savage—sometimes I feel constrained to apologize for persistently calling him "savage"—the savage has always the same thought process. Everything that can be seen has a soul. Animism. Parts of the body even have souls; the head one, the breast one. Why? You can feel it hopping about! And so on. Some say five souls. The Egyptian said three.

Again, when you sleep, consciousness, which is the head soul, is not there. Where is it? If it is not there, it must be wandering about and visiting strange places—dreams. And also, when away, it is liable to get caught by some malignant spirit. This is easily proved by men whom white men call lunatics, but who, as any sensible person would know immediately, have lost their souls in sleep, and a demon has entered into their heads. Is it a bad demon? Yes? Have you magic to overcome it? No? Well, placate it. It is holy.

In the Balegga Mountains the natives build miniature huts alongside each one of their own—devil houses for the demon to live in comfortably so that he may not enter their households. Bad devil? Sure! If otherwise, why go to the trouble of providing a house for him? If he's good, he's good, and therefore there is no reason to bother with him. Admirable logic!

Again, regarding the wandering of souls; such is a source of terrible danger. If your enemy catches your soul, what can he not do to you? Here comes in the homeopathic magic. The halfway house has been purified in the sense of making magic to escape from the revenge of the souls of the people he has slain. He may not begin courting without ceremonies and omens and only at stated periods, he may not eat plant, or eat of, the fruit until he has propitiated the god of vegetation—and so on. The more savage the people, the greater the numbers of laws enforced.

From these beliefs are derived a thousand customs, many of which survive, as I have remarked, today, bereft of all meaning; ceremonies which, if the original import were understood, would—well, would certainly startle many good folk.

Such superstitions and practises are by no means confined, of course, to the African blacks, as any student of Indian lore knows. But an astonishing thing is the similitude of such beliefs in the history of every known race. The savage, so often contemptuously referred to, is the vision of ourselves seen through the dense glass of time. Is there not much to learn from him? What appears to be a ludicrous if terrible truth is that these peoples never do wish in the least to injure the victim; not at all; ever it is done for the sake of the person's good, for the benefit of the community. They are perfectly sincere. But, oh, the oceans of blood that welter for this curious god of a million faces!

Isles of the South Pacific

WHERE cannibals, now civilized, once danced to human heads, broad plantations now sweep down across fertile islands to the sea. Here is a land that yields four-fold, and more. Many have heard its call. And there is room for more:

Question:—"I would like some information about the Solomon and New Hebrides islands.

Anything you can tell me will be appreciated."
—Augustus Crizolle, Chicago, Ill.

Answer, by Mr. Mills:—I can only guess as to what you want. How much easier it would be for A. A. editors if questioners would only put their requests in a series of questions, and number them!

The Solomon Islands are British—a double row of them in the group, volcanic and mountainous, extending for nine hundred miles across the North Pacific, southeast of the Bismarck Archipelago (taken from the Germans by the Japanese). There are seven large, and many small, islands in the group, the largest, Bougainville, being one hundred and forty miles long and thirty-five miles broad.

Their history is fascinating from the explorer's point of view, being found and lost and found again, down through the ages since Alvaro de Mendana of Spain sailed down from Peru in 1567 and gave the name of his wife, Ysabel, to the first of the group he touched at. The name still sticks,

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though possession has changed during the centuries. A Spanish settlement followed. Traders came and stayed, despite the savagery of the islanders, who were cannibals up to quite recent times.

In 1845 the French Mission of the Society of Mary was established on Ysabel. The bishop and three of his helpers were murdered within two years, and the mission abandoned.

Fifty years later the mission was reestablished. It and other missions now flourish, for the natives have become civilized. The British Government has several resident commissioners established throughout the group. It hasn't a healthy climate, but, unlike most of the other South Sea groups, hurricanes are unknown.

The sea-level temperature varies from 73 degrees at night to 92 degrees. The native pig and wild dog are the only big game—the dogs in packs have killed men. Birds are plentiful, and beautiful, crocodiles are common; also poisonous snakes. Not an attractive place for the tourist, but worth while for the scientist. Everything tropical flourishes, but copra—coconut kernel—and bananas are the chief items of export. The population is estimated at 150,000, Malaita being the most populous island of the group.

New Hebrides: This group, which is under the dual control of England and France, comprises about thirty inhabited islands. The group is set in the midst of the Pacific Ocean, only five or six days' steam from Sydney, Australia. Being in the Tropics, the climate is warm and humid—wet in Summer, dry in Winter. The soil, being rich and fertile, makes the islands valuable. The group was discovered by Quiros in 1606—when he thought he had struck a continent—but was not heard of again until the British circumnavigator, Captain Cook, reported his visit and named the group in 1768.

Two years later Bougainville reported the discovery to be a group of islands. For many years England and France disputed possession, and a co-dominion was eventually set up. This has not been satisfactory. For the sake of the natives, it is hoped some league of nations will improve conditions.

It is suggested that the Commonwealth of Australia should have the mandatory. New Zealand laid claim to the group years ago.

The main island is 63 miles by 32, heavily wooded, and with deeply watered bays. Evidences of Spanish occupation are occasionally unearthed.

There are fair numbers of British and French residents—planters and traders—in the group.

Ambrym, the scene of a sensationally destructive hurricane and earthquake, and volcanic eruption, in 1913, is one of the big islands. Exports: Coco, coffee, copra, cotton, maize, sandalwood. The values of its exports in 1916—the latest I can get hold of—were: To Australia, $217,805; to Noumea (New Caledonia, for France), $620,000. The islands are healthful, but hot.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

DE LAPP, E. Please write to sister. Very important. —Address 1223, 44th Ave., Oakland, California.

RASK, SAM. Last heard of in Haden, Ariz. Write to your old pardner in Hurley, N. M. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address P. MCLEAN, Box 232, Hurley, N. M.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

ONNERS, F. W. Wrote to the Camp-Fire in relation to the story "To a Finish," in the Mid-May issue of *Ventur*e. Will you kindly send your address to LOUIS DGE, 5712 Mimika Ave., St. Louis, Missouri.

ERTAIS, MARINO. Son. Last heard of while working in Alaska salmon fisheries. Formerly rked on U. S. A. transports. Any information will be ciated.—Address CIVILA DEL ROSARIO, 47 Calle Rebell Santa Ana, Manila, P. I.

HEWKE, MAUDE. Sister. Last letter written from Alameda, Cal. Any information will be appreciated. —Address MRS. GORDON MARVIN, Stillwater, B. C.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

KULLER, HARRY. "Handsome Harry." Last heard from when a stoker on the Great Lakes. If you see this, pal, write. Will shove off in the Fall.—Address EARL J. TEETS, Camp Brookline, Brighton, Me.

ROHRICH, ARTHUR. Last heard of in New York City, June, 1915, headed for Brazil. Any information concerning him will be appreciated by his brother.—Address W. H. ROHRICH, 3949 W. 23rd. St., Cleveland, Ohio.

HOLDER, CHARLES HENRY. Left England for New York; from New York went to Montreal, Canada; from there to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Tall, slender, age about thirty-two. Any one knowing of his whereabouts will kindly communicate with his parents.—Address MRS. G. HOLDER, Ovington Cottage, No. Clare, Suffolk, England.

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THE following have been inquired for in full in either the Mid-October or First November issues of Adventure. They can get the name of the inquirer from this magazine:

ATKINS, WARREN; Beck, Mrs. Bessie; Biechele, Harry; Crossey, Wm.; Farley, "Rush;" Gibbs, Richard H.; Glauman, Al; Kade, Ray T.; Knox, Mrs. R, also Bill; Meyer, Lidia or Gotlieb; Moran, Thomas or Michael; Nance, I. V.; Roycroft, Lloyd C.; Roycroft, Sydney, Lynn; Rubenstein, Meyer; Rutherford, Wm.; Sims, Elsworth; Smith "Bantam Red;" South Africans; Stiner, N. G.; Sweeck, Joseph E.; Texas, "Slim;" Turner, Geo.; Van Wassel, Charley; Whitworth, "Billie."

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

HASTLAR GAL BREATH; Ruth Gilfillan; Jack P. Robinson; Ray Ozmer; Miss Jimmie Banks; O. B. Franklin; Bryon Chrisholm; Wm. S. Hilles; A. B. Paradis; G. E. Hungerford; James P. Goggins; E. E. S. Atkins.

UNCLAIMED mail is held by Adventure for the following persons, who may obtain it by sending us present address and proof of identity.

ASPINARTOS, A.; Brady, Grover C.; Brison, Clarence F.; Benson, E. W.; Babcock, Lucius A.; Beaton, G. M.; Carr, Mrs. Fred; Cosby, Arthur F.; Collins, John; Coles, Bobby; Campbell, Frank U.; Dorr, H. S.; Engelby, B.; Geers, Mrs.; Harvey, Ted; Hines, Joseph; Harris, Walter J.; J. C. H.; Hart, Jack; Harding, James; Harrison, Tillson L.; Hunt, Dan'l O'Connel; Kuckaby, William; Kohn, Edward; Lee, Wm. R.; Lofler, Mrs. Harry Leighton, Capt.; Larisy, Jack; Lee, C.; "Lonely Jock"; MacDonald, Donald Carr; MacMahon, J. A.; Macnarnee, Alva I.; Miller, B. J.; Morrisy, K. A.; McCord, P. A.; Maples, C. M.; McGraw, John; Nelson, Frank Lovell; Nichols, Leon; Richards, Lewis S.; Reid, Raymond; Rodgers, Stewart; Schmidt, Walter; Scott, James F.; Seaman, W. E.; Shephard, H. O.; Stanley, Jack; Swan, George; Taylor, Jim; Von Geulcke, Byron; Wetherell, Delos E.; Williams, Bertram I.; Williams, Ray; Williams, W. P.; Western, S. S.; Young, Leon.

PLEASE send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given us do not reach you. —Address E. F. BRACE, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD
FIRST DECEMBER ISSUE

Two complete novelettes to appear in the next *Adventure* are described on page two. Here are the remaining contents of that issue.

THE SPIDER — ***By Arthur O. Friel***

He looks like a spider and he lives like a spider. He is feared and hated equally—but he has one weakness.

GENTLEMEN OF THE NORTH. Part III — ***By Hugh Pendexter***

In the Sioux country, *Franklin* and "*Medicine Hair*" find that in escaping one danger they have encountered a greater peril.

SAID AFZEL'S ELEPHANT — ***By H. A. Lamb***

In the glittering *howdah Said Afzel* rides, guarded by his slaves and soldiers, little realizing the danger lurking in the narrow pass—the second of the tales of Abdul Dost—Man of the Mogul.

THREE WISE MEN — ***By Romaine H. Lowdermilk***

"*Parson*," they jeeringly name him as he paints Biblical quotations on the well-curb in front of the Nugget Saloon, but there comes a day when he proves himself something more than a parson.

ASSIGNATS — ***By Henry Leverage***

An Englishman, a Scotchman and a Yankee become unwilling recruits in the Bolshevik navy.

THE MAKINGS OF A SAILORMAN — ***By Roy P. Churchill***

He is not a very salty sailor, but he has the ability to think quickly and to use his huge fists with telling effect. Aboard the *Alta* he finds plenty of opportunities for showing these abilities.

OH, LORDY! LORDY! — ***By William Patterson White***

Susy Svenson is as heavy as *Andy Ball* is light, and he is so thin he can't shift his chew without losing his balance. *Andy* falls in love with *Susy*, but finds it very difficult to fall out again, for *Susy* is no shy violet.

BIG MEDICINE — ***By Edgar Young***

The men at the Canal Zone call him "*Big Medicine*" because he can talk louder and longer about himself than any of the other workers. His tales are hardly believed, yet he always has an audience. Then comes a mysterious stranger and the trouble starts.

JEST JIM, FIDDLIN' JIM — ***By Hapsburg Liebe***

Three times the door of a dilapidated cabin in the Tennessee mountains creaks on its wooden hinges, and, with each creak, Fate gives a new twist to the eventful life of "*Fiddlin' Jim.*"

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